



CROCUS and MEADOWLARK COUNTRY

A STORY OF AN
ALBERTA FAMILY



Georgina H. Thomson



Mrs. L. Veisey

B4A

250

TRUCUS

and

MEADOWLARK

COUNTRY

CROCUS
and
MEADOWLARK
COUNTRY

Copyright, Canada, 1963
The Institute of Applied Art, Ltd.
Edmonton, Alberta

First Printing November 1963.

Printed by Co-op Press Limited
Edmonton, Alberta

CROCUS and MEADOWLARK COUNTRY

*Recollections of a happy childhood and youth on a
homestead in Southern Alberta.*

by
GEORGINA H. THOMSON

Published by
THE INSTITUTE OF APPLIED ART, LTD.
Edmonton — Alberta

To the memory of
My FATHER and MOTHER
and the happy old days on the homestead.

"Nothing is worth remembering but our childhood."

—James Stephens

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Writing this book has been a labour of love for me, because it took me back to my happy childhood on my parents' homestead in the Parkland district of Southern Alberta. As I have said in my book, it was a wonderful thing to come as children to this beautiful prairie country, and to wander as we did, unrestricted by fences or roads over the sea of grass, untouched except by grazing animals since the beginning of time. The winters may have been long and hard, but there were always the chinooks to break the cold spells, and before long the pale purple crocuses in their furry coats, and the meadowlarks with their joyous song, arrived to tell us that spring had arrived.

True, there were hardships we wouldn't want to go back to, and there was hard work for everyone in the family, but there was fun and happiness too, even if we had to make our own amusements.

Boys and girls of today may find it hard to imagine that children could be happy in such a world, without radio, television, automobiles, airplanes, nor even a telephone in the early years. That is why I have written down all I could recall of those times, so that children and grown-ups too of future generations may know what it was like to live on a homestead in Southern Alberta at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is the way of life that has disappeared almost as completely as the buffalo.

Georgina H. Thomson

CONTENTS

1	We Arrive	9
2	Our Home On The Range	16
3	Father Buys A Cow	26
4	Fun And Games With Old Roany	30
5	Some of Our Neighbours	35
6	The Happy Hills of Hay	43
7	Some More of Our Neighbours	48
8	We Increase Our Herd	56
9	Our First Snow and First Prairie Chickens	60
10	The Photographer Comes	63
11	We All Had Our Chores To Do	69
12	We Made Our Own Fun	77
13	We Were Omnivorous Readers	83
14	We Made Our Own Music	90
15	Curly Spends the Winter With Us	95
16	Visiting The Neighbours Was Pleasant	99
17	I Run Away From Home	108
18	Our First Christmas on the Homestead	113
19	Our First Springtime on the Homestead	121
20	We Get Acquainted with the Wild Flowers and Birds	130
21	The Presbyterians Start A Mission	134
22	A Snow-Storm in June	140
23	The Day the Colt Arrived	143
24	Alberta Becomes a Province	147

25	We Go Saskatoon Picking	150
26	Our First Picnic to the Hills ...	157
27	We Harvest Our First Wheat	161
28	Our Two Big Sisters Arrive From Ontario	166
29	Jim Gets a Homestead of His Own ...	170
30	Our Community Gets A School	178
31	Big Bugs and Little Bugs	188
32	Our First Departmental Examinations And More About School	192
33	We Get A Man Teacher at Porcupine	199
34	The Blizzard	210
35	We Are Promoted From Wagon to Democrat To Buggy	216
36	Our Kitchen Had No Modern Conveniences or a Woman's Work Was Never Done on the Homestead	222
37	Parkland Slowly Becomes a Reality	227
38	More Examinations and Two Marriages	234
39	I Go To High School in Calgary	239
40	Some of the Hired Men In Our Lives	246
41	Learning To Be A Teacher	252
42	A School-Marm At Sixteen	256
43	I Discover "Boys"	265
44	World War and Many Changes For Us, Father Sells the Homestead	272

ILLUSTRATIONS

First Council Meeting	12
Thomson's Homestead Buildings	18
Our First Stable	22
Louis Roy's Homestead	36
"The Big Four"	38
Haying near Parkhill	44
Edmond Auclair	64
Louis Roy's hired man George Gilbert	211
Chaddy and Georgie Thomson	218
Parkland, Alberta	228
Parkland Livery Barn and Feed Stable	229
Parkland Blacksmith Shop	230
Our House (1909)	237
Hauling Hay (1911)	248
Porcupine School	257
Off to pick Saskatoons (1909)	258

Chapter One

WE ARRIVE

I was in the tiny stuffy washroom being violently sick when our long colonist train creaked slowly into the Calgary station on September 4th, 1904, so that my first impression was not a happy one.

There were no dining-cars nor coffee-counters on these colonist trains, even if the average settler could have afforded such a luxury, so all the families carried large lunches to last over the journey. There were four of us: my mother, my 19-year-old sister Bee, a younger sister Chaddy not quite ten, and myself just turned twelve, so we needed a very large lunch. However, we had broken our journey from Galt, Ontario, by visiting our Aunt Jane at Carberry, Manitoba, and she had replenished our lunch-box with many goodies, of which I recall chiefly roast chicken and doughnuts.

Someone had advised Mother to take a spirit lamp along so that she could make herself a cup of tea. Somehow the methylated spirits seeped into the doughnuts, at least into one doughnut, which I unfortunately ate. I have never been able to look a doughnut in the face since. It was lucky I got it up, but I still felt ghastly when we gathered up our telescope valises and other belongings and got off the train.

The old Calgary station of those days had a pretty little lawn at one side with gay flower beds, which looked very inviting to our train-weary eyes. The fresh clean air felt wonderful too, after the smoke and coal-dust we had been breathing so long.

A newsboy was yelling "Calgary Herald, Free Press and Eye Opener." We thought "Eye Opener" was the funniest name for a newspaper we had ever heard. We did not know that in after years it and its editor, Bob Edwards, were to become legends in Alberta.

Mother was upset to find that the train for the south which we were to take down to father's homestead, had already left, as we were behind schedule. This meant we should have to go to a hotel and stay overnight.

On the platform we were surprised to see a young man who used to live next door to us in Galt. He offered to take us to a hotel and helped us carry our luggage there. It was "The Dominion" not far from the station, and mother took a double room for the four of us. There was a verandah running right across the front, upstairs as well, and Chaddy and I went out on this and watched the traffic on the street below, which seemed very exciting to us, especially the cowboys on their horses and the occasional Indian. Of course there were no automobiles at all in those days.

Mother's funds were very low. She had started the journey with just enough for bare necessities and she was not prepared for emergencies. Father had been out west with our only brother Jim since April, so there were no wages coming in, and there had been a lot of expense shipping our household effects, buying tickets and so on. So mother had to count her pennies, and she decided she and Bee would go down and have supper in the hotel dining-room, while Chaddy and I ate some of the remainder of Aunt Jane's lunch. I was still shuddering and could not look at food anyway. Even when I shut my eyes the walls seemed to be going round and round.

The hotel beds felt good after so many nights on the colonist train, where our beds had been made by pulling together the hard slat-covered seats, and making ourselves as comfortable as we could with the cushions and bedding we carried with us.

Next day we boarded the south-bound train which proved to be a mixed train with only one passenger car while the rest carried freight, which we stopped at every town to unload. This made our progress very slow, but Chaddy and I did not mind. We were fascinated by the prairie stretching away on every side, and the little towns with names so new to us — Midnapore, De Winton, Okotoks. To this day, after more than 50 years, I never go over this line and hear these names called by the trainman without a little reminiscent thrill coming over me.

At High River there was a lunch room at the station and a woman came out and rang a bell. The conductor called out that 25 minutes would be allowed for supper, but we did not go in as mother felt we could not afford it.

After this delay we went on to Cayley, and then Nanton was next. Father's homestead was 10 miles from Nanton which was our post office and shopping centre. Only a mile and a half away from the homestead, however, was a flag-station called Parkhill, and father had arranged with the regular train conductor to have us go on there after paying the extra fare. Unfortunately it was Saturday and a different train crew was on duty. When mother went to pay the conductor for the ride to Parkhill, she was told that she would have to buy us tickets all the way to Stavely, the next station, or he would not let us off. Mother may not have had enough money for the four extra tickets or she may have thought the conductor was taking advantage of her. Anyway she refused to pay the extra fare, so we were put off the train bag and baggage at Nanton.

It was pitch dark by this time, and we huddled on the platform not knowing what to do or where to go. In this crisis a man with a lantern came out of the darkness and asked us if we were Mr. Thomson's family, as he had heard we were expected. He told us that when father came to Nanton he always got his dinner at Mrs. White's boarding house, and offered to lead us there, carrying some of the luggage as well.

When we arrived at the boarding house Mrs. White told us she was completely filled up and had no room for us. Then, I suppose, when she saw the anxious look on mother's face, she relented and said mother might sleep with her, and she would make up a bed on the floor for us three girls. This was our first experience of western hospitality and I think it was a fine example. We slept well on the floor and in the morning were further set up by a good breakfast. We felt that father and Jim would be along for us soon.

I might as well explain here why they had been batching on the prairie for four months before our arrival. Father had heard of land being thrown open for homesteading in Alberta and decided to come west and take up a quarter, bringing Jim along for company. A number of other Galt men were on the train for the west, among them Mr. Peter H. Patterson. He had been out the year before and had taken up a homestead half a mile east of the proposed town-site of Parkhill. Father had intended going north of Calgary



First Council Meeting in the Parkhill (now Parkland) district, Alberta, 1904. Photo by Edmond Auclair. Back row, left to right: Gust Eld, Charlie Hanson, Albert Anderson, Jack Struthers, George Scott, Scotty McFarlane, Jim Thomson; next row, seated: Tommie Auclair, George B. Thomson, Frank Auclair, Billy Ellison, Jack Scott. On bench at end of table, W. H. Hawk, sec.-treas.; Standing behind table, Peter H. Patterson, Councillor; seated on ground Wm. A. Rothwell.

to Carstairs, but Mr. Patterson persuaded him and the other Galt men to go along with him. He had built a shack on his quarter which differed from the general run by having a cottage roof instead of the shanty type. Here he took the company of Galt men to live until they could find homesteads for themselves.

Each man contributed to the food supplies needed. Our folks had brought out two big boxes of provisions including several pounds of butter. This was a scarce article in those days when, although the prairie was covered with range cattle, there were very few milch cows. One day when one of the party, Will Rothwell, was getting up provisions from the hole under the house which did duty as a cellar, he stuck his head up and called, "There's only one pound of butter left, Peter. Shall we eat it now or wait till Bailey comes?"

"Keep it till Bailey comes," said Mr. Patterson, and this has been a saying in our house ever since, whenever it is a question of using something precious or saving it for a more important occasion. Bailey, it should be explained, was Mr. Bailey Powell, the promoter of Parkhill, the town-to-be, and of him I shall have more to say later on.

Jim and father used to tell us many such anecdotes of their batching experiences. Peter Patterson was chief porridge-maker, but in spite of all his practice, he nearly always let it burn. Our brother Jim, being the youngest of the crowd, had to do a lot of the dish-washing, and he wore one of our tablespoons half down scraping the burnt porridge pot. They didn't have such gadgets as "chore-girls" in those days. Jim said Mr. Patterson used to hum a hymn every morning as he stirred the oatmeal, always the same tune, "I am thine, O Lord," but he never got any further than the first line or two which seemed to be all he knew, and then he started over, sometimes on a higher key. When breakfast was ready he would call, "Hurrah boys!" which Jim always thought very funny because old Andrew Johnson, one of the party, hardly qualified for the name with his long, patriarchal beard.

That summer of 1904 before we women folk came out, the first Council meeting of the district was held at this shack of Peter Patterson's and he was elected the first councillor. Ed Auclair took a photograph of this meeting with Peter

posing importantly beside a homemade table with a scroll in his hand, and the pioneers of the community including our 17-year-old Jim grouped around him.

Meanwhile father had filed on a homestead that was to be our home for years, the north-west quarter of Section 22, Township 15, Range 27, West of the 4th Meridian. He made us all memorize this location so that we could tell where we lived in those fenceless, roadless days of the country. This particular quarter had already been filed on, but for a sum of money the owner consented to "abandon" it, and father got it. This was quite a common practice among land seekers.

Mr. Patterson, who was a carpenter of sorts, built a house and stable for father, and he and Jim moved up to their own place, accompanied by some of the other men from the crowded Patterson shack. Father and Jim told us afterwards that the day mother and we three girls were supposed to arrive they had quite a time getting rid of these bachelors and grass-widowers, and getting the place cleaned up and ready for us. They had been so busy with their last minute efforts, that they saw the lights of the train, visible for miles over the treeless prairie, before they were ready.

Father realized they could never make it up to Parkhill in time with the wagon and team, so he sent Jim out ahead with his new saddle-horse Dixie, while he followed. Alas, the train didn't stop. It gave a long derisive whistle and went puffing on to Stavely.

Father and Jim were deeply disappointed but were sure we must have got off at Nanton. So next morning bright and early they hitched up Buck and Queen to the lumber wagon, our only conveyance for some time, and started for Nanton.

There was a happy reunion at Mrs. White's front door. Mine was marred by Jim's answer to my immediate inquiry if "Muff" had arrived. She had been my pet cat in Galt, a pretty tortoise-shell, but not popular with the rest of the family for a number of reasons. She liked to lie on the most comfortable chair and left her hairs there. She was always having kittens, on one of the beds if she could arrange it, and the kittens had to be given away or drowned. One of her favorite foods was a plain boiled potato which she did not leave on her dish but dragged on to the floor, leaving bits to be stepped on. She howled a lot, and over and above

all this, was not completely housebroken, making the odd "mistake."

Once she was taken by father away out into the country and left at a farm. I was not told this and hunted the place for her. However, I need not have worried. Two nights later I heard her cry at my bedroom window and calling joyfully, "Muff's home," I let her in. Then my eldest sister, Winnie, bought poison for her, but just hadn't the heart to give it to her. At that time there were no veterinarians in our town such as now put animals "to sleep" swiftly and painlessly.

Under these circumstances I cannot understand why mother decided to have her brought out west. She probably thought cats would be scarce on the prairie, and I think Jim had written to send her because of the hordes of mice.

Our furniture and other "settlers' effects" were brought out by freight in a car we shared with the Lintons and Ellisons who had taken up homesteads near ours. Warwick Linton and Jack Ellison were allowed to come in the car because there were pigs and chickens to be fed, and so saved their railway fare. The boys were only sixteen or seventeen and were heartily sick of their long tedious ride before they arrived. Muff and her current family of kittens were put in a box with minute instructions on how to feed her. Somewhere in Muskoka she got out of her box, being probably terrified by the noise and strangeness of her new surroundings, and escaped through the door of the car into the woods. Warwick told Jim they couldn't get the kittens to drink, so he gave them "to a kind-faced woman" in Gravenhurst.

This was Warwick's story and we had to accept it. I turned my face to the wall and had a little weep, and for years was to be haunted by the idea of Muff, the pampered household pet, trying to survive in the wilds of Muskoka. However, this was no time to grieve, and soon we were all aboard the lumber wagon and were rumbling and bumping toward our new home.

Chapter Two

OUR HOME ON THE RANGE

There was one spring-seat in the wagon, and father sat on this to drive, with Mother and Bee beside him. Jim and Chaddy and I sat on a board put across the wagon sides, with a blanket to cushion it a little. There were no roads at all and no fences as far as one could see, except the barbed wire around the occasional homesteader's shack. These showed up here and there, little dark spots on the wide stretch of rolling plain. Here man was just a mite in what seemed like infinite space. The empty prairie stretched to the foothills and Rockies in the west and to the sky in every other direction.

There was only a faint trail visible, made by previous wagon wheels on the brown prairie grass, but Buck and Queen followed it without trouble. If you have never ridden in a wagon over such a trail, winding in and out to skirt burn-outs, and sloughs, and gopher villages with mounds where badgers have dug, I think you have missed a great deal. It is many years too late to enjoy this primitive form of travel now, for the prairie is nearly all broken, the winding trails ploughed under, and barbed wire fences on either side guard the straight graded road-allowances, some of them hard-surfaced with four lanes.

Buck and Queen were not a very well matched team. Buck, or Billy Buckskin as we used to call him, was buckskin in colour, tall and rangy with a gentle head. When occasion demanded he could be taken out of harness and used as a saddle-horse, and had an easy, rocking gait. Queenie was a dark bay mare, shorter and heavier in build than Buck, with narrow suspicious eyes and a Roman nose. Both horses had reason to be disillusioned, as they had been overworked on a railway construction project before father bought them. Father was good to his horses, and while he got a good day's work out of them, he fed them well and was never rough with them. Jim was inclined to be impatient and when he

held the lines, some current seemed to run along them to Queen, making her become difficult and sometimes even to balk. She had also a habit of jerking her head up when he went to put the bridle on her, and hitting him a crack with that hard Roman nose. This was probably due to some mistreatment by a previous owner, but it did not endear her to Jim. I remember one time when father was away and Jim was working the horses in the field. In the middle of the afternoon Queenie balked, and Jim got so angry he put some pieces of wire on the end of the whip to try to make her move. Mother went out to see what was the matter, and when she saw the wire on Jim's whip, she said, "Unhitch the team and put them in the stable." When mother spoke like this, no one questioned her authority. Jim's quick temper had already cooled anyway, and he felt a little sheepish, so he meekly did as he was told. In later years mother always said she was glad that by the time Jim became a doctor, automobiles had replaced the horse and buggy.

Now as we rumbled and bumped over the prairie on our way to the homestead, Jim began telling us about his new saddle-horse, Dixie. Father had brought Jim out west with him, partly for company and partly for help in cooking and other household jobs. Jim had often been camping, but father, with a mother and seven sisters and then a wife and five daughters, had probably never even boiled water in his life. As Jim was just seventeen, mother thought he should stay in high school till he got his matriculation. Jim with his head full of Indians and cowboys was wild to go, and he had been such a help and moral support to poor father, that he thought it only fair to reward him by trading a stack of prairie hay they had put up, for a saddle-horse, saddle and bridle for him. Dixie was the pride and joy of Jim's life, and time was to show that, as father said, "He was the best little piece of horse flesh in the country," and we never sold him.

Jim next went on to tell us about "Buckles," their new pup. "He'll be coming out to meet us," he said, and sure enough, as we drew near the end of the slow ten-mile trip, which hadn't seemed long at all to us, a small black dog came into sight at the top of the rise leading to our homestead.



Homestead buildings of George B. Thomson near Parkhill (now Parkland), Alberta, December 13th, 1904. Left to right: Jim on Dixie with Buckles at his heels, Chaddy aged 10, my father G. B. Thomson, myself Georgina, aged 12, my mother, my sister Beatrice (Bee). Horses Buck and Queen, cows Fanny Fern and Lassic. Note ploughed fireguard at front. Edmond Auclair, photographer.

Father stopped the team and Buckles was lifted in. After he had greeted everyone with delighted wriggles and tail-wagging, he went to the front and stood up with his fore-paws on the dashboard, gazing with interest all about him from his new point of vantage, while the wind made his soft ears stand up.

Buckles was soon to be a great favorite with all of us, as he already was with father and Jim. He was a black short-haired collie with a white chest, tan legs and a tan spot over each eye. He viewed all the world cheerfully and showed that he did by wagging his tail on the slightest provocation. It was a long hard tail, and Jim often used to amuse himself and annoy others by holding a tin pan a little way from it. The tail would wag so hard and hit the pan with such force that it made about as much din as a kettle-drum. It was no use shouting at Buckles for he would only take it as encouragement and wag all the harder.

At the moment we were all pretty quiet for we had topped the rise and were having our first view of our new home. It wasn't much to look at. It was a bare, unpainted wooden house with the gable end toward the road. Unlike most homesteaders' shacks it had an upstairs with two as yet uncurtained windows above and one window and a door below. The house had no foundation, but was set flat on the ground so that on windy nights because of its height, it rocked in an alarming way, as we were to find out. Sometimes at first mother used to feel that she should get us dressed and outside for fear the house went over, but it never did and we kids, at least, soon learned to sleep peacefully through the windiest nights. Later the men banked it it up with earth and manure which helped to steady it and also kept it warmer.

It stood in the centre of a three-acre square surrounded by a barbed wire fence — the only fence at first for miles around — and a strip of ploughed land inside the fence to act as a fire-guard in case a prairie fire should come sweeping up to destroy us and our possessions. Often at night we could see these fires in the distance and occasionally the men would have to go to fight one.

When we arrived that first day, we all hurried in to see the inside of the house. There were two rooms downstairs,

the sitting-room at the front which our men had done their best to make homelike by arranging the well-known chairs, table, and little heating stove, which had arrived ahead of us and had been brought from Nanton. The back room was a combined kitchen and dining-room, with our good Ontario cook-stove set up, the old dining-room extension table, the cupboard and other familiar objects. Between the two rooms were the stairs, which were so steep and in their newness so slippery, that one had to go up and especially come down warily. Chaddy often hopped the first few steps and slid the rest with a crash that brought mother running, fearing the worst.

The cellar steps went down below these and they were even more steep. The cellar itself was really just a hole cut in the ground under the house with no walls or floor. The carpenter had put up a hanging shelf from the beams above and all food had to be kept on this or suspended in sugar- or flour-sacks from beams, as a great many field mice came in, and they seemed to be able to climb anywhere. Later mother had a "safe" or cupboard with wire screening over the door to keep them out. We found out in the spring that water as well as mice came in, through the rain-saturated soil sides of the cellar. We had to put pieces of board about to step on, and dig a sort of well in the floor where the water could collect and be carried out in pails. Worse to our minds was the fact that the wet attracted a kind of lizard which were quite harmless but revolting to look at, and screams would be heard when any of the women-folk happened to encounter one of these. When we arrived, however, since it was a sunny September, the cellar was cool and dry and kept everything very well.

There were no partitions in the upstairs of the house, but mother improvised by hanging from the beams the hand-woven rag carpets we had brought from Ontario, to make divisions between the different "rooms" and give some privacy. We three girls had a double room right across the front of the house and we pinned gay pictures cut from magazines onto our carpet wall, which Bee said made it look "picturesque." Father and mother had one cubicle in the back part and Jim the other. Father liked a window that looked out toward the stables so that he could keep an eye

on them and see that everything was all right there. Our two windows faced the foothills and Rockies and gave us a wonderful view, especially of the gorgeous sunsets.

There were no de luxe, spring-filled mattresses in those days, at least not for ordinary folk like us. Mother had sent out empty ticks with the furniture and Jim and father had filled them with prairie hay. People sleeping in such beds were liable to be wakened by spear-grasses that had worked their way to the surface, sticking into them, but mother put thin feather beds on top of the other ticks. Later when we had threshed our first crop, straw was used instead of hay to stuff the ticks.

None of the walls or ceilings in our new house were plastered, so the beams and studs were bare, but the space between them was papered with a coarse grey building-paper which besides keeping the house warmer, was not inartistic, making a good background for pictures. Sometimes the wind would get under this paper and make a strange moaning sound that was rather depressing.

Of course we young ones did not spend much time examining the house after we arrived, but rushed out to the stable to see Dixie. He greeted us by putting his nose around the corner of his stall and over the half-door of the stable entry, and giving a soft whinny. This was a characteristic position we got to know well through all the years we had him. He always hoped for a handful of oats, a piece of bread or some sugar which he would take gently, licking between our fingers with his soft tongue. He had a pretty head with a broken white stripe down his face, and father always kept his top-knot clipped.

Jim eagerly put the saddle and bridle on him and led him out. To our envy, he asked Bee if she would like to go for a ride. Of course she did and he helped her on and gave her the reins. As the stirrups were too long for her, he stuck her feet into the side straps, and away she went. Father arrived just in time to see her galloping off over the open prairie, and shouted to her to come back. She knew nothing about neck-reining but she managed to turn Dixie, and came galloping gaily back to us. Father scolded Jim for putting her on the horse, and her for getting on, and for riding with her feet in the straps, "a very dangerous thing



Our first stable on the homestead with Dixie looking over the door for a visitor or some oats, his favorite position. Stable built 1904.

to do," he said. He told her Dixie was too spirited for a greenhorn, especially a girl, and she must never try it again. Dixie *was* spirited and would roll his eyes mischievously, but there was nothing mean in his whole make-up. Father was always timid about our attempting anything new. He never wanted Jim to go swimming or to have a rifle or shotgun. It was quite a while before he would let any of us girls ride horseback, just as in later years he discouraged us from learning to drive the car.

So Dixie was put back into the stable. This was a shed-roofed structure one-board thick, with four stalls and an entry or passageway running in front of the manger, where a bin of oats and some hay was kept to feed the horses. Across the barnyard a small henhouse had been built. Another small building stood some distance north-east of the house, very prominent on a slight rise, so that besides being windswept, its position made the family comings and goings plainly visible from house, stable or trail, while the privy itself was sure to appear in every photograph we tried to take.

After the inspection of Dixie we suddenly realized we were very hungry and hurried back to the house, where father had eagerly turned the cooking over to mother and Bee. I don't remember what we had for dinner, but it would probably be the typical homestead fare we were to become so used to: back bacon bought in a slab and called "pea-meal" because it had been rolled in that meal, dried beans or canned vegetables, as no one had a garden yet, potatoes which could be bought in Nanton, dried fruit such as apples or apricots with canned strawberries or pineapple as a special treat. There was usually jam which came in a large wooden pail and was said to be largely turnip with coloring, whatever fruit label it carried. Corn syrup was used as a substitute for milk on our porridge and for butter on our bread, as the store butter was not only high in price but high in flavour owing to lack of proper refrigeration.

The bread father and Jim had when we arrived was exceptionally good and quickly disappeared under our attack. At first they had bought their bread from Mrs. Norval Wilson who admitted she was the world's worst bread-maker. She would set it with the best intentions, and then go off on a jaunt with Norval to Nanton or to a neighbor's and as likely as not stay overnight with someone on the way. When she came home, she would "punch down" the bread, and unless it was too discouraged by her neglect, she would shape it into loaves and bake it anyway, so it was often quite sour and heavy.

Before long Jim had developed indigestion, and father said he grunted with discomfort in his sleep. So he took him into Nanton to see the doctor. Dr. Creighton was a typical pioneer doctor making long trips by team or on horse-back over the prairie or back into the foothills at all hours and in all weathers. Many a homesteader's or rancher's family including our own had reason to be grateful to him. When he died some fifty years later, I wrote a tribute to him for the Nanton News.

On this first occasion when father took Jim to see him, he examined him, wrote a prescription for him, and then lent him a rifle which he had got in the South African War, in which he had served as a young doctor. He told Jim he might have it for a while to hunt coyotes. His charge for

the examination and the prescription was one dollar, nothing for the rifle.

Father took the prescription to Chisholm's drug store and had it filled, then went on to the general store to get some supplies. While he was there, Dr. Creighton came hurrying in.

"Oh here you are," he said with the faint stammer or hesitancy with which he always spoke. "I've been looking all over for you. I shouldn't have charged you a dollar for that prescription. You're a homesteader and I know you haven't too much to come and go on," and in spite of father's protests he insisted on handing him back the dollar.

Whether it was the medicine or the rifle, something soon cleared up Jim's indigestion. His recovery was probably helped by the fact that they changed bread-makers and began getting their bread from Mrs. William H. Hawk who lived on a homestead about three miles south-west of ours. She was originally from Pennsylvania and was a famous cook.

After we arrived, mother was soon kept busy baking huge batches of bread for us, and our appetites were so enormous that we had to be rationed on some items of food, notably the bacon and dried apricots. Bee cooked the latter in an especially delicious way, soaking them over night and then stewing them with plenty of juice, adding enough sugar to make a rich, flavorful syrup. Jim, for some reason of his own, christened them "badger-skins". He had his own names for other foods, too. Butter was "smear" and a kind of dropped biscuit or cake that Bee made in a hurry when we were short of bread, he called "squats". Her regular biscuits were "B B B B B's" which he translated into "Bee-Bee's Boer Bullet Biscuits," but actually Bee's biscuits like her other cooking were very good and he was only teasing. A dessert she made that none of us were very fond of was blanc mange, and Jim purposely miscalled it "black mange".

I mustn't forget the dried-apple pies and those made with other dried fruit such as raisins and a kind of condensed or dehydrated mincemeat pack in little square boxes. Pies, like apricots, were rationed and we watched that they were evenly distributed, but not so the rice and sago, or the bread pudding that we did not care for. Jim had once

been grossly deceived when he had dinner in the hotel in Nanton. He chose "cabinet pudding" from the menu because it sounded interesting, only to find when it was brought to him that it was just plain old bread pudding and not as good as he got at home.

Our diet would certainly not have met with the approval of modern nutritionists: no milk (at first), no orange juice, no spinach, and very few eggs, as we had brought only five hens from Ontario, and the one-board-thick shack of a henhouse did not encourage them to lay. But we were young and healthy with plenty of outdoor exercise, and everything tasted good to us.

We started each day with oatmeal porridge made in an old-fashioned iron pot with four little legs, and a stick to stir the porridge. In fact, everyone going by would give it a stir. We all liked porridge, probably because Mother had never made us eat it nor told us it was good for us. She had been brought up in a large Scottish family in which for reasons of thrift the children were made to eat a big plate of porridge before having anything else. As a result, she early made up her mind that if she ever had children of her own, she would never make them eat porridge, and she never did. Perversely, we regarded it as a treat and jealously watched to see that our plate was as full as the others'.

Father used to say it was the same principle as that used by an old Mennonite farmer back in Waterloo County. His cows would not eat pea straw, of which he had quite a big stack, so he fenced off the stack from them; whereupon they broke through the fence and greedily ate the straw. Father said this farmer applied the same system to marry off his plain daughters. He forbade any young men to come around, and soon the daughters were being courted surreptitiously, and finally escaped from their upstairs windows by means of ladders brought by their suitors, eloped with them and got married. This was Father's story anyway.

Chapter Three

FATHER BUYS A COW

It seemed clear that about the first thing we should get was a cow. Father heard that an American was bringing in a carload of milch-cows from Wisconsin, and while we waited for their arrival, we began to build an addition to the stable, a lean-to the same size as the horse-stable, and like it, with the heads of the stalls facing the feeding passage or entry.

When we heard that the cows had arrived, Father and Jim hitched up Buck and Queen and drove to Nanton in the wagon to see them.

Chaddy and I watched eagerly for their return, which was easy to do as there were no buildings nor trees to block the view in any direction. When we saw the wagon coming about a mile away, we went to meet it, taking Buckles with us. He trotted proudly ahead of us, ears pricked up and sensitive nose sniffing the air as he went. Suddenly he would dive down into a hole where a badger or coyote had been digging gophers out, and disappear on an important investigation of his own till only his tail and hind legs were visible. Then, having satisfied his curiosity, he would trot back to us, and shove his cold nose into our hands as though to assure us that all was well. Once when the slinking form of a coyote was seen in the distance, his hair bristled angrily and with a snarl he was off in pursuit of it, coming back very unwillingly when we whistled and called him.

We loved these walks over the prairie and spent a great deal of our time exploring the coulees and old buffalo trails not too far from the homestead.

Though it was too late for flowers, there were bright clusters of rose hips and white buckbrush berries. The September twilight was falling and as we were walking westward, we faced one of the wonderful sunsets over the Rockies that we could never get used to all the years we were on the homestead.

Soon we met the wagon but were disappointed not to see any sign of a cow. All three of us were helped aboard, Buckles as usual taking his proud place at the dashboard. Then Buck and Queen started again and we went rumbling and bumping home. Above the noise we deluged Father and Jim with questions about the cows.

"There were two we liked," said Father, "but we couldn't decide which to take so we came home to ask the rest of you. One was a big roan muley, rather shaggy-looking but quiet, and the other was red and white."

"What's a roan and what's a muley?" Chaddy asked.

"A muley hasn't any horns," explained Jim rather importantly, "and a roan has a mixture of red and white hairs all over."

"Let's get the roan, Father," I said. "Plain red and white cows are so common."

The rest of the family agreed, so next day the two men made another trip to Nanton to fetch the cow. Late in the afternoon they came home again without her.

"The roan opened the gate of her pasture and is now wandering on the prairie," Father explained, "we should have been warned."

"So many trips for one old cow," grumbled Jim.

"Another day of canned milk," complained Chaddy.

But the day passed quickly as days did then, and toward evening the wagon drove into the yard with a big cow trailing behind, and a little roan calf, the image of his mother, in the back of the wagon.

"His name is Samson," said Jim, "because he's the strongest calf I ever saw. I've had a dickens of a time holding him in all the way from Nanton."

"What's the cow's name?" I asked.

"I guess we'll have to call her Roany," said Father.

"Oh not Roany!" I objected. "That's so obvious."

"I think it's quite good enough for her," sniffed Chaddy. She had been walking around our new possession taking a good look. "She's as ugly and stupid looking as can be."

"Well we might call her Roany for everyday," I compromised, "but her real name will be 'Annie Rooney.' If anyone asks, we'll tell them that."

That night real milk formed part of our supper and was fully appreciated.

After being milked, Annie Rooney was tethered to a peg outside the fireguard fence to graze on the prairie grass, while Samson was kept inside the fence. The next morning was Sunday when we slept in later than usual as a rule, but this morning at what seemed an unearthly hour, we were wakened by a loud noise outside. Father, looking out his window, soon discovered the cause of the racket. Samson had evidently got hungry and gone through the fence to his mother. Buckles, who had felt heavily the responsibility of his new charges, and had probably slept with one eye open, went to drive him back. Roany became ferocious in defence of her son, and keeping herself always between him and the dog, rent the stillness of the prairie dawn with deep bellows, and charged madly. Buckles in return barked hoarsely and dodged the cow's threatening muley head.

"It's like an elephant on the rampage," said Jim as he pulled on his clothes and went with Father to the rescue. Before they got to the scene of the excitement, the cow's rope came undone at the halter and away she went over the prairie with Samson. Buckles was called back with some difficulty and all was quiet again.

"She'll soon be back," said Father, "and I guess Samson has saved us the trouble of milking her, so we won't bother with her till after breakfast."

After breakfast she had still not come back, so Jim got on Dixie and went after her. He carried his rope as he was anxious to try his skill at roping, and he wore an old felt hat of Father's with the crown poked up which he thought made it look like a sombrero. In his western saddle, rope in hand, he was sure he looked like a real cowboy.

"Be careful, Jim," Father said as Dixie wheeled and snorted. Mother didn't seem worried and Jim only laughed and rode gaily off, feeling proud that the eyes of his family were on him, and anxious to make a good showing.

Roany continued to graze till he was within a short distance of her, and then started off on her slow, clumsy cow-trot. Jim's rope shot through the air in the direction of her head and then slid off her back while she put a few more yards between them. Away they went, the cow keeping

up the same annoying pace, with Dixie prancing impatiently behind.

"Run her in," shouted Father. "Never mind the rope."

But Jim had his own ideas. After a few more vain throws of the rope, he turned back to the stable, and leaving Dixie, he started off on foot.

"It keeps me so busy holding him in that I can't work the rope right," he explained as he hurried off.

The rest of us went about our morning chores, but Jim, with quiet persistence, kept up the chase. Now and then we would catch a glimpse of him patiently stalking the cow till he got within roping distance. Then, as Bee remarked,

*"The rope went flying through the air
But Annie Rooney wasn't there."*

Church services were held Sunday afternoons, and all of us, except Jim, got into our best clothes ready to go, climbed into the wagon, and rumbled off over the prairie, till Annie Rooney and her stubborn pursuer were mere specks in the distance.

Services were conducted in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Norval Wilson, partly because they were good Methodists, and the first missionary in the district, Rev. L. R. McDonald was a Methodist, and partly because they owned a piano. I shall give a description of these early church services in a later chapter. On this afternoon the minister had reached the conclusion of his sermon, and his weather-beaten face glowed with earnestness as he said, "Let us pray."

Just then the door was pushed quietly open and in came Jim. He was dressed as he had been in the morning, though he had had the grace to remove his "sombrero." He slid into the seat beside me, while the minister paused and the congregation smiled. Then in the hush preceding the prayer, he was heard to remark to me in a stage whisper:

"Nipped her around the neck and the front leg as neat as a button."

And then the minister prayed.

Chapter Four

FUN AND GAMES WITH OLD ROANY

As we had still no well near the house, the stock had to be watered at a spring which was on our homestead but half-a-mile from the building. Chaddy and I were told it would be our job to water Roany. Father thought Dixie was still too wild for us to ride, so we had to walk to the spring twice a day and back, one of us leading the cow, and the other coming behind with a piece of rope to urge her on when she wanted to stop and eat grass, or just stop.

The rope was added because on our first trip to the spring the cow had shown great unwillingness to move in that direction or any other, and half-way there she planted her feet stubbornly and stood gazing dreamily off toward the horizon in the most exasperating way. Chaddy tugged and I got behind and slapped, but on the cow's tough hide the slaps were like little love pats, though they made my hands sting.

There was nothing growing near that remotely resembled a switch, except some stunted buck-brush. I broke a few little twigs of this off and applied them as hard as I could to Roany's rear, but she didn't seem even to notice them, and all the time Chaddy kept saying in a maddening way, "Don't hit her too hard or she'll start suddenly and I won't be able to hold her."

By this time I was in a rage. Stooping down I gathered up a few pebbles and threw them at the cow.

"Take that, you mean old thing," I yelled.

The pebbles seemed to touch hidden springs, and as Chaddy had predicted, the cow did start suddenly. Jerking the rope free she began a quick trot. We gave chase but by the time we reached the spring, Roany was standing in the middle of the nearby slough, eating the slough grass which was still green.

"Why didn't you hold her?" I screamed, coming up some yards behind Chaddy, who, though younger and smaller than

I, wasn't as fat and made better speed.

"I'd like to see you hold her when she gave such a jerk. It was your fault hitting her. I told you not to," wailed Chaddy.

It's always irritating to have someone say "I told you so," so this remark didn't put me in any better humour. We walked around and looked at Roany from every side of the slough and she looked calmly back at us. Now and then as if to warn us what a treacherous place the slough was, she would raise one foot slowly, making a sucking noise in the sticky mud.

"It sounds like a boy kissing his best girl," Chaddy said, and we giggled, but I felt worried. I had visions of Roany escaping again out on the open prairie and mixing with the range cattle before we could get back to tell Father she was loose.

"And he paid \$50.00 for her and Samson," I lamented.

"I don't see how he ever thought she was worth it," said Chaddy.

It was very tiresome sitting on the bank waiting. We had left Buckles behind for fear he would frighten the cow, but now we wished we had him.

Finally I said, "I'm going in after her. What's the good of sitting here all morning watching her chew her cud?"

"I'm game if you are," said Chaddy, and in we started. The slough water was cold and at every step we sank deeper, but at last we reached the cow. She had still not made up her mind and paid no attention to kicks or even water splashed on her.

I had to make a trip to dry land for pebbles, and when I came back I was in no mood for trifling, so every stone reached its mark. The cow did not like it and started so abruptly again that Chaddy, who was holding the rope, lost her balance and fell with a splash, arms outreached into the muddy water. By the time I had helped her up, we were both in a very moist state, for tears mingled with the muddy slough water on our faces. The cow had set off for home alone at a good lick, probably remembering her calf, and we followed, watching her ungainly figure through our tears.

Suddenly Chaddy stopped and teetered up and down on her water-soaked boots. "Listen to them squinch," she said.

I did the same, and as we stood there teetering, we saw how funny we looked and began to laugh.

Father and Jim came along just then on their way home to dinner and laughed too at our muddy, bedraggled appearance. Hearing what had happened, Father showed us how to tie the rope in a sort of muzzle around the cow's nose so we could hold her if she tried to run away, and Jim presented us with a short piece of rope to use as a quirt to keep her moving.

After this we had very little trouble at watering time. Annie Rooney became halter-broken and led so well that it gave us an idea. We thought it would be fun to put our dolls in an empty grocery box, tie it to the cow's tail and have her pull them around. This may sound silly but it didn't take much to amuse us in those care-free days. We had pretty well outgrown our dolls but they helped to pass the time away when there wasn't much to do. So now we put Iris Louise, Wanda Marie and the rest of the doll family into their make-shift carriage, tied it to Roany's tail and started off. Round and round the stable we went, one leading and one coming behind to steady the box and watch out for "accidents." Sometimes the big animal got balky and then one of us would run ahead with a little chop and by allowing a little lick now and then, would keep her on the move. This ungainly caravan seemed so funny to us that we kept it up for some time, laughing uproariously, but taking care we were out of sight of Mother and Bee in the house. When we did let the cow go, she lay down with a gurgle of relief, and Mother wondered that night why she got so little milk.

Since Roany had become so tame, the trip to the spring began to grow monotonous. Twice a day we had to leave whatever we were doing and trudge the half mile there and back. Sometimes it took a bit of nagging on the part of Mother and Bee to get us started.

One day as we moved slowly along the trail in gloomy silence, we saw a small bunch of range cattle in a little hollow near the spring.

"What would you do if they chased us?" Chaddy asked hopefully.

"I'd jump on Annie Rooney and ride away," I bragged. This made her hoot with laughter, for I was short and

fat, and to picture me climbing on the cow at all, and then ambling over the prairie on her back, needed quite a bit of imagination.

I was a bit nettled at being laughed at. "It isn't as if I couldn't do it," I said, and catching Roany by the shoulder, I tried to spring on, but couldn't make it. Chaddy stopped laughing and came to help me, but she was too small and slight to boost me up. Then we tried leading the cow to a buffalo wallow, and I would stand on the higher ground and jump, but in vain. At last, quite red in the face and annoyed by Chaddy's giggles, I caught hold of her.

"See if you can do it," I said and gave her a powerful hoist. She was quite active, and easily scrambled astride Roany's shoulders. I picked up the rope and away we went.

"It's grand up here," Chaddy called from her perch.

"You look like those people in India who ride elephants and have their pictures in the geography," I said, a bit enviously, as I plodded along on the ground. I felt that Chaddy always succeeded where I failed. She was slim and pretty with big blue eyes and white skin. I was fat and freckled, and red hair wasn't fashionable in those days. Everyone liked her better than they liked me, I thought morbidly.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Chaddy said suddenly, as if she had been reading my thoughts. "You could get on Roany if you had a box to stand on, so let's keep one out where she's tethered. Then you can ride her to water and get off when we come to the spring, and lift me on so I can ride her home."

This scheme worked very successfully for some days, and we suddenly became quite eager to water the cow. We even suggested that it might be a good idea to water her three times instead of twice. When this didn't work, we spent quite a while each day riding the poor cow round and round the circle made by the long rope that tethered her. When she got tired of playing horse, she would suddenly lower her head and send the rider over it with some force. This came to be considered part of the performance and caused no ill feelings. As the stable hid us from the house, we did not worry about being seen.

One afternoon Bee, while out gathering our few eggs,

was surprised to see Chaddy riding over the hill from the spring, and me walking ahead leading the cow. This explained our new interest in our work, and she called Mother to see the comical sight. Unfortunately just at that moment Roany became fractious and decided to run down the hill. Usually I could stop her by bracing my feet against a gopher hole, but today she meant business. Tossing her head, she dragged me over the dry, slippery grass, bouncing Chaddy high at every step.

Down the hill we came. Mother expected any minute to see me trampled or Chaddy flying through space. Bee ran toward us, shouting at me to let the rope go. We didn't know we had been seen and I jumped up guiltily. Bee made a dash for the rope but the cow swerved and headed for the nearby haystack.

"Stop her!" Chaddy kept yelling, clinging desperately.

When Roany reached the stack, she put down her head and started around it, rubbing herself against it all the way as cows like to do to scratch themselves. Chaddy was brushed off as if she were a fly. When we picked her up she had a bump on the back of her head but was not hurt otherwise.

We were scared of what Father might say when he heard about it at suppertime, but all he said was that if we must ride, we might as well learn to ride Dixie. Then we would have a bridle for control and a saddle to stick to.

"And Dixie wouldn't run around a hay stack with us," added Chaddy, tenderly feeling her bump.

Chapter Five

SOME OF OUR NEIGHBOURS

We found people very friendly when we came to the homestead. The few wives in the neighborhood were glad to hear of the arrival of a family with other women in it. The very first day, Mrs. Norval Wilson and Mrs. Gus Hedlund drove over together the three miles across the prairie from their adjoining homesteads in one of the few buggies in the district. We were soon to become good friends and visit back and forth. Mr. and Mrs. Til Fisher rode up on horseback the first day too. They had a ranch on Mosquito Creek and Mrs. Fisher rode with her husband there, but we were surprised to see her riding side-saddle. Most of the western women rode astride like men.

Soon after our arrival too, Mrs. W. H. Hawk, the famous cook and bread-maker, drove over with her little boy Leslie, and her married daughter, Mrs. Sam Lowther. These women, too, became life-long friends, and we visited back and forth. In fact visiting was one of our most pleasant recreations, and no one stood on ceremony in those old days, when unexpected guests, even complete strangers, were welcome and shared whatever was on the table, and no apologies made on either side.

Most of our first visitors, however, were men, as there was a majority of bachelors among the homesteaders, or temporary bachelors whose wives were still in the East.

Adjoining our land on the east and in the same section was the homestead of Louis Roy. Louis was, I am sure, the most interesting and colorful character in the neighborhood. He jokingly called himself "Louis Roy the bum," but he was really a solid, hard-working farmer. Though he had had a wife back in Quebec, they were separated and Louis lived as a bachelor in his shack, and did his own cooking. This was not hard for him as he had cooked for the N.W.M.P. at Fort Macleod for a time. He smoked French-Canadian home-cured tobacco, and as he was seldom seen without his pipe in his mouth, both he and his shack reeked of the smoke.



Louis Roy's homestead N.E. 7th Sec. 22, Twp. 15, R. 27, W. of 4th Louis Roy standing in the foreground. Photo by Edmond Aveline July 1907.

He drove about the country in a wagon with a home-made box without springs and a board put across for a seat. It was a real bone-shaker, especially as he drove straight across the prairie, hitting badger-holes and other bumps at full speed. When he gave us a lift one day, we called out, "Hey, Louis, you missed a hole back there," but he only grinned and said, "I get dat one coming back."

He had adopted a little liver-and-white spaniel, Curly, whose front legs and back had been injured in an accident. His former owner had left him to Louis to cure or destroy. Louis cared for him, patiently rubbing his poor legs with all sorts of remedies till Curly was able to walk about in a hobbling sort of way. When he grew tired or wished to look about him, he would sit straight up like a gopher with his front paws held in a begging position, and stare about him with wistful brown eyes. If Louis went any place, Curly rode with him in the wagon, sometimes sitting beside him on the seat, if the going was not too rough, his long curly ears blowing in the wind. Louis used to say he would rather lose his best team than his dog.

Louis always had a number of cats around the place, and in the morning he used to cook a pot of porridge big enough for them as well as himself. He thought they should wait till after he had finished and if they hung around the table too much, he said "I put syrup on their beards," and then they had to retire to lick themselves clean, leaving him in peace. We always thought it amusing to hear him talk of the cats' "beards," which we called their "whiskers." He had many characteristic little phrases. If he wanted to describe a great number of something, such as cattle, he would hold up his thumbs and fingers with the points all bunched together and say they were "as tick as dat."

He liked to use current slang and sometimes gave it a slightly different twist. He had heard the expression "kick the bucket" and he would tell us someone had "kicked up the bucket." Someone had used the phrase "jet black," so one day he told us his cow had had a "jet white calf," evidently thinking of "jet" as simply an intensifying word. Where we would say, "I didn't say anything," he would say, "I pass no remark." If his cows had strayed, he would tell us, "I looked every place and I found them in the last place I



Threshing outfit of Thomson, Roy, Wilson and Johnson, known as "The Big Four." G. B. Thomson, engineer, beside portable engine. Norval Wilson to right. Photo by Edmond Auclair October 3, 1907.

looked." Where we would say a thing was the best we had ever seen, he would say, "It was the best I've seen before." Thus he called one of his horses "Pig," because, he said, "He's the easiest horse to keep fat I've seen before." All these sayings added flavor to his speech which was a hundred per cent better than most English-Canadians could have done in French.

Louis used to hitch his "off" horse up on the "nigh" side sometimes, because, he said, "A change is as good as a rest." This was heresy to Father who knew that horses hated to be changed about in this way.

Louis had quite an assortment of horses. "Pig's" team-mate was his exact opposite. Pig was so fat that when we rode him, our feet stuck straight out on either side. His mate, however, was an elderly mare named "Kate" who used to come in off a winter on the range thin and unkempt, shedding her winter hair in great patches. She was the better worker of the two at that, and sly old Pig used to hang back and let her pull the greater part of the load. Louis also had an ancient white horse, very stiff in its legs, which he called "Whitey." After we had begun to grow some crops on our homesteads, Father persuaded Louis, old Andrew Johnson and Norval Wilson to form a company with him to buy a portable steam engine and threshing machine. They became known humorously in the district as "The Big Four." One day Louis drove his team, Whitey and another horse, up to the outfit with a load of bundles. The sight of this monstrous new machine belching smoke and making strange noises was too much for old Whitey, and he dropped dead. Louis looked at him sadly and uttered his obituary: "He was the best horse I've had before."

One day as Louis stood near the engine talking to someone, a spark flew down, landing on his neck. He put his hand up and rubbed the spot, exclaiming with indignation and surprise, "By hell, dat's danger!"

Another day one of his teams ran away when he had left them for a little while without tying them. Louis flew into a rage. He pulled his hat off, threw it on the ground and jumped up and down on it. "You big Norwegian bears!" he shouted at the horses. "You No-hearts!" There were probably other epithets we didn't understand.

In spite of his quick temper, he and my father never had a quarrel all the years they "neighbored" back and forth. The nearest they came to it was over a matter of politics. Louis was a Liberal but Father was a Conservative and thought he ought to do some missionary work on Louis. He always talked to Louis or any non-Anglo-Saxon person quite loudly, as though he thought they would understand him better then. This time Louis came back at him in no uncertain terms. "I always was a Leebereal and I always will be a Leebereal," he shouted, so that was that.

Louis was very hospitable and one Sunday morning he arrived up bright and early in his wagon. Father asked him where he was off to. He said he was going to Nanton to get some supplies and added, "I want all you folks to come down and have Sunday dinner with me tomorrow." Father had quite a time persuading him that he had somehow lost a day and that this was Sunday.

The second winter we were on the homestead, Louis invited us and the Lintons and some others for dinner on Little Christmas Day. This was January 6th or Twelfth Night, a special day among the French Canadians, Louis said.

Somewhere he had got a goose as well as two or three roosters which he roasted. He set out two long tables on trestles in a new granary he had built. He himself presided over the table with the goose, which he carved so generously that we younger ones at the second table never got a taste of the rare bird and had to content ourselves with the commoner but still delicious chicken. Louis had baked several pies for the occasion but as he had only one pie-plate he had to bake one pie at a time. As he took each pie from the oven, he piled it on top of the others, with the result that they all stuck together and were rather damaged when he pried them apart, but they still tasted good. Like a waiter, he asked each of us which kind of pie we would like, apple, lemon, raisin or mince, but no matter which we chose, we still got mince which was of course, all he had made, using the dehydrated bricks which were such a boon to bachelors and homesteaders' wives.

Louis had a great admiration and respect for our mother. She used to write letters for him, read him the replies

and help him with his English and other problems. She remembered some French too from her school days and that was a bond. One day Louis went to Nanton with his wagon for supplies and though he made an early start, it was dark when we heard him returning. We went out to get the mail from him and were surprised to see another neighbor, Alex Patterson, driving the team. He motioned to the back of the wagon, and there was Louis lying, completely blotto, having imbibed so freely in town that he slept through all the bumps on the ten miles home.

Alex took him to his shack and got him to bed. He said Louis' concern next day was whether Mrs. Thomson had seen him or not. When he found she had, he was so ashamed that he "swore off" completely and stayed with his resolve.

Louis sometimes got hold of a paper in which love-lorn women in search of a husband, set forth their qualifications in a letter or advertisement. Louis called these women "corresponds." He knew of one or two men who had married "corresponds" and the marriage had turned out very well. Sometimes he toyed with the idea of getting Jim to write to one of these for him, but he never quite got up his courage to do so, and went on batching for some years more.

Father and Louis worked together quite a bit, sharing machinery and labor, and sometimes Father shared us with him, sending us down to plant potatoes for him behind the plough and to pick them up in the fall. Louis always brought us out a lunch in midmorning or afternoon and paid us a little for our work. Very small change meant a lot to a homesteader's kids in those days. Once after our older sister Ethel had come west, she joined our potato-picking team and Louis bought her a pair of beautiful gauntlet gloves with a fringe down the side, such as girls wore when riding horseback. True to his native French politeness he bought them too small, as a compliment to the size of her hands. Chaddy and I were green with envy.

After Louis got a cow, Mother offered to churn his cream for him, and this job fell to me, as I was rather interested in dairy work. I got more than I bargained for. Louis had no proper basement and the cream, after being stored in his one-roomed shack, not only got very thick and sour, but absorbed the smell of his French-Canadian "tabac."

It was quite an ordeal for me to churn it and I used to scrub and scald our little dash-churn very thoroughly afterwards. Mother also, too generously we thought, offered to mend Louis' socks for him. This job fell to me too, as Mother thought it was a good way for me to learn to darn. The size of the holes really gave me great scope and were a real challenge to a mender. Unfortunately as I have remained a spinster I have never been called upon to put my hard-learned skill into practice on a family of growing boys.

Chapter Six

THE HAPPY HILLS OF HAY

Father's first source of income on the homestead came from putting up hay. His hay-field was the open prairie in any direction we cared to go. The hay was the natural prairie grass to be had for the cutting. It seemed queer to us to be haying in the fall, but the grass still made good hay even this late for it was already cured by the sun and the wind.

Father and Louis Roy had put up several stacks and intended putting up still more before the snow came. There would be a large demand for hay by the ranchers when winter came, and we needed it for our own stock as well.

One sunny fall morning Chaddy and I decided to take the men a drink and watch them work. In Ontario we had seen hay-making which meant driving a big rack load of hay into the dusty old bank barns and unloading it into the loft right up to the rafters. In Alberta it was quite different.

The grass or "prairie wool" was cut by a mower and raked into cocks in the usual way, but instead of being pitched into a hay rack, it was gathered by a "sweep," to which two teams of horses were hitched. The piles of hay were swept up to a derrick placed in front of the stack that was being built. Here by means of ropes and pulleys, the sweep was drawn up by the horses, now re-hitched to face the opposite way, to the top of the sloping derrick, where the hay dropped down onto the stack. It took one man to spread and tramp this hay and build the stack, while two others drove the teams, standing on the sweep. Westerners soon got into the habit of never walking if they could ride.

When we got to the scene, we found Louis tramping the hay and building the stack, at which he was considered quite expert, though he had spent most of his life in lumber camps in Quebec and British Columbia. Father and Jim were off for another load. Noticing that some of the hay had



Haying near Parkhill (now Parkland) in the fall of 1904. Left to right: Georgina and Chaddy Thomson seated on the ground with Buckles, Louis Roy building the stack, Jim Thomson driving Buck and Queen, Father driving Louis' team, Mother behind the mower. See on Divie.

fallen over the sides when the sweep went up, we got pitchforks and piled it up at the foot of the derrick so it would go up with the next load. We had got ourselves a job, but it was really only fun and we were free to sit in the shade of the stack and gossip with Louis.

He would hold forth on the relative merits of his horses, Pig and Kate. Pig, he said, was a cunning old fellow, knew when to save himself and so was always sleek and fat.

"Wan day," Louis told us as we sat in the hay, "I was come with a big load from Nanton. I come to de railway crossing and Pig, he balk. I hit him two, three times, but he just stand dere like wood. De train was come around de curve and I stan' up and hit old Kate. Kate make wan beeg jump an' pull de wagon an' Pig too, an' jus' den de train she go by 'whizz'!"

Louis' eyes grew black with excitement as he talked and the whizz of the train was so real we could almost hear it.

Sometimes he told us stories of his early life in Quebec:

"Wan time I was drive de log on de River Hottawa. I was jus' a kid, mebbe sixteen, mebbe eighteen. Wan day I fall off de log and get under de jam and de logs close over my head. De men think I'm gone for sure. Wen dey haul me out, dey say my fingers were cave in de log so dey hardly get dem loose. It was dat log dat save me."

Buckles used to stay with the haymakers most of the day. He liked to follow the sweep about and watch for any field mice it might disturb. One morning he disappeared. When Jim missed him he thought he must be at the stack with us, but when he came in with the next load, he was told by Louis that we hadn't been there. The dog had not been seen since the last load and Jim at once jumped to the conclusion that he had been carried up with the sweep and lay smothering in the haystack. Impulsively he began to tear the stack down. He paid no attention to Louis who objected strongly to seeing his hard work undone. He was sure if the dog had come up with the sweep he would have seen him as he tramped and forked the hay. Jim would not listen and kept on tearing the stack apart, while Louis danced about, shouting and waving his arms wildly.

Fortunately before too much damage could be done, the

object of the excitement came over the hill with us, joyfully announcing our approach with lunch and a cold drink. He must have heard us coming a long way off and gone to meet us, quite unconscious of the trouble he had caused.

And so the happy days of our first autumn in Alberta slipped away. The haymaking was finished at last and the prairie around was dotted with long level stacks of hay. These had a temporary fence around them to protect them from the range cattle and a fireguard was ploughed as well.

Later the haybalers came and brought new excitement. We were never tired of watching old Daisy, who provided the horsepower that ran the baler, as she trudged round and round the monotonous circle. Now and then she would slow up and snatch a bit of hay, but one of the men was sure to notice her and throw a handful of dirt at her to make her quicken her pace.

"Doesn't she ever get dizzy?" Chaddy asked. But the men only laughed. It was no concern of theirs if she did, as long as she kept the baler going.

These were busy days for all. Jim helped the balers and Father hauled the bales to Stavely, about eight miles south, making the first wagon trail from our district to that town. Mother and Bee were kept busy cooking for the extra men, so one night, to help out a little, I decided to do the milking. Grandma Thomson had let me practise on her old cow Sonsie before we came out west, so I felt competent as I took the blue granite pail and set off for the stable and old Roany.

At first it seemed great fun. The manger was filled with sweet-smelling hay which the cow munched on contentedly. The red rays of the late afternoon sun came in through a crack in the door, adding a fairy-like brightness wherever they touched the dusty grey of the stable.

Soon my fingers and wrists and arms began to ache. The streams of milk I brought were very small, for old Roany was what was called a "tough" milker. There was still only a pitiful little bit of milk in the bottom of the pail. Every few minutes I would have to stop and rest, but I was determined not to give in and go to the house.

The men came in from work and I could hear old Daisy

eating her well-earned oats across the passageway. The red light disappeared from the crack in the door and the stable grew dim and shadowy. It was quite late when at last I got up and stretched. The pail looked as full as usual and I lifted it up with the great satisfaction of having accomplished something. Annie Rooney was now chewing her cud and I patted her rough shoulder with a sense of comradeship.

"Nice old Roany to stand so patiently to be milked by a greenhorn," I said, and the cow looked at me dreamily through her half-closed eyes.

Then I trudged proudly off to the house with my pail of milk leaving Roany in the twilight peace of the stable, dreaming, no doubt, of nice muddy sloughs and cattle trails winding through prairie grass and flowers.

From then on I got plenty of milking to do. Bee was wise and never learned, but I always liked it better than most farm chores. Many years later during World War II when everyone one had to register and check off their useful accomplishments from a list in the questionnaire, among the few I possessed I could at least proclaim the fact that I could milk a cow.

Chapter Seven

SOME MORE OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Our nearest neighbors, not counting bachelors, were the Ellisons, who had the homestead half-a-mile to the northwest of us. The family consisted of Mr. Ellison or "Old Jack" and his son "Young Jack," Mrs. Ellison and her son Will. Old Jack's first wife had died leaving him with young Jack to care for, while about the same time his brother had died leaving his wife with a young son, Will. The sister-in-law and brother-in-law eventually married, an arrangement that worked out very happily for all concerned. They had come originally, I think, from Manchester, England, and had the characteristic Lancashire accent and dry humour. They had migrated to Galt, Ontario, often called "The Manchester of Canada," and as "Old Jack" was a skilled machinist, he had a very good job in one of the foundries there.

For some unknown reason they had heard the call of the west, and Will had come out with the same group as Father to look for a homestead. He batched with the others in P. H. Patterson's shack, and then when Father got his house up, moved in with him and Jim.

Will or Billy, as most of us called him, bought himself a team of horses, and as he had never been near a horse in his life before, he had quite a time getting used to harnessing and driving them. It got on his nerves so much that he had nightmares nearly every night. Father said he would sit up in bed and begin to drive the team. "Giddap," he would say, "Gee, Haw," and shake the imaginary lines in his hands. The other men, sleeping around him on their hay-filled ticks on the floor, got pretty tired of this, and one night one of them yelled, "Lie down, you fool, and keep quiet, can't you?"

"How can I lie down," asked Billy, "when he's got the line under his tail?"

Our first acquaintance with Mrs. Ellison was on the train on our way out. She had been put in charge of Douglas Linton, as the rest of the family were following later. I

was quite a responsibility, as Doug was a lively boy a little older than I was, and in the long, crowded colonist train it was easy for him to give Mrs. Ellison the slip and seek adventures with kindred spirits. She would go up and down the aisles inquiring, "Where's young Dooglas? Have you seen young Dooglas?"

Doug's last adventure was in 1918 when he fell in France and his brother Warwick walked miles from where he was stationed to place a cross he had carved, on his grave, and plant some violets and forget-me-nots there.

Mrs. Ellison acted as midwife and practical nurse in our community in the early days and her cheery, business-like manner and capable hands did much to relieve families in time of crisis.

None of the Ellisons had any idea of farming so they subscribed to the farm weekly, "The Family Herald and Weekly Star" and farmed by it religiously. They got along very well, though sometimes we thought they carried the instructions too far. In one issue it said that calves should not be pampered but should be allowed outside to make them hardy. So the poor little Ellison calves were tethered outside in all weathers and stood shivering with their backs humped and no shelter from the wind, much to Chaddy's and my indignation and pity.

The first few month's when the men were breaking land and could not afford an extra team of horses, Father would borrow Ellisons' team one day to make up the four-horse team needed to draw the sulky plough, and they would borrow Buck and Queen the next day. The Ellisons did not understand the care of horses as Father did, and he always hated working what he called their "poor old skates."

He was glad when he was able to buy another team, a black mare called Jess and a sorrel which Father decided to name after Martin Armstrong from whom he bought him. Martin was usually called "Mart" for short but as Father never got a name right, he called the horse "Mark," a very good name for a very good horse who served us faithfully all the years we were on the farm.

While we were still exchanging horses with the Ellisons, Chaddy and I often had to lead our team down to their place, and Mrs. Ellison used to give us "a piece" sometimes,

which was always very acceptable. She made a kind of cake which we thought she called "hungry cake" but which was probably "Hungary cake," as I have since seen the latter in cook-books. But "hungry cake" seemed a very suitable name for it to us, for we were always hungry and it was very good.

Another attraction for Chaddy and me was the fact that the Ellisons raised Skye terriers, and had a female and male named "Frisky" and "Buller," the latter name reminiscent of the Boer War ended just three years before.

For some reason we referred to Mrs. Ellison among ourselves as "Dame" Ellison, perhaps because her round apple cheeks reminded us of some character in our story books. We had been brought up in the Scottish Presbyterian Church with the strict rule that no unnecessary work should be done on the Sabbath, but "Dame" Ellison took a rather dim view of this. She said she didn't see that it was any worse to bake bread on Sunday than to bake pies. This rather puzzled us, as Mother would not dream of baking either on Sunday, but we kids approved of pies any day of the week.

As a young fellow "Old Jack" had learned to step-dance, and at the dances held in our neighborhood in any shack with a room big enough, or in a schoolhouse when these began to be built, Old Jack was in great demand. "Give us a dance," people would call. He had a very light step and would put on a good show even when he had become quite elderly, or seemed so to us.

"Young Jack" used to walk up to our place on winter evenings and play parchesi, crokinole or other games with Chaddy and Jim and me around the kitchen table.

As a family, though, we never visited back and forth much with the Ellisons nor became very intimate, probably because we came from such different backgrounds and had different basic interests. They were friendlier with two English bachelor neighbors: Alf Stirk who lived west of them across the coulee and rode a beautiful grey single-stepper, and Billy Whitehouse who lived in a shack down near Mosquito Creek and was said to be a remittance man. The incompetence of the remittance men reflected on the English in general in the west, so that some advertisements for workers

even added "No Englishmen need apply." This roused Mrs. Ellison's indignation, and she would say to us, "One thing the English have, they've got pluck," only she pronounced it "plook" to rhyme with "book," which seemed to give it more emphasis. Her assertion was amply proved when the war broke out in 1914 and the remittance men went home to fight and die for the mother country. As one writer said, "They might be green, but they weren't yellow."

Will Rothwell, a young bachelor neighbor whose homestead adjoined ours, on the south, came from the same background as we did. In fact his mother had gone to school with our mother back in Galt, and she and her two sons attended the same church as we did there, the "U. P." They sat around the corner from us in the gallery and the younger boy, Jimmie, used to make faces at Chaddy in church and make her cry. Will was some years older and was librarian in the Sunday School, taking around to the different classes the books considered suitable for Sunday School libraries in those days. For us girls there were the Elsie books (which I never could stomach), the Bessie books, the Pansy books, the Mildred books etc. This poor fare wasn't his fault, of course — he only delivered it.

Because of his father's death, Will had had to put aside the dream of a university education. With the hope of adventure and the wish to better his fortunes, he came west with the same group as my father and batched with them till he was able to file on the abandoned homestead of old Tommy Auclair. Sometimes homesteaders who were not too enthusiastic, could be persuaded to abandon their quarters for a consideration. This was frowned on by the authorities, but many people, including our father, got their homesteads in this way. Tommy was a tanner before he came to the prairie and he had a scheme for making a fortune by tanning the skins of gophers, coyotes and badgers. It came to nothing but quite a while after he left, skins remained stretched to dry on the outer walls of his shack.

Will Rothwell was always eager for new experiences. The government had promised to put in a post office at the flag-stop known as "Parkhill" where we didn't get off the night we arrived. As I mentioned before, a man named

Bailey Powell was promoting the town and had induced his father-in-law, Mr. W. J. Parkhill M.P.P. of Midland, Ontario to invest in his scheme, receiving in return the doubtful honour of having the place named after him.

When we arrived the only occupants of the future hamlet were some pigs in pens near the railroad track which made the trainmen dub the place "Hog Town." Will Rothwell thought he would get in on the ground floor by starting a grocery store at the railroad crossing at the top of the rise where it was expected the station would be built. He thought if he could get the post office, he would draw customers from all the neighboring countryside. Unfortunately for poor Will a post office was not granted for nearly three years, and when people had to go to Nanton or Stavely for their mail as well as hardware and drygoods, they were not going to make a special trip to Will's store for a few groceries.

The thing I remember most about the store was one time when we had a debate in the store on the good old subject of "Country Life vs. City Life." Bee and I supported the country and Will and Jim championed the city. Mame Linton was judge, but there was no time-keeper and we were all allowed to talk as long as we liked. I can't remember who the audience were, if any, and I can't remember anything I said, but whatever it was, it aroused Jim, so that he began his speech without any proper preamble by simply saying, "Now Dodo there said . . ." and continued to make this personal reference to me in all his arguments. I had been called "Dodo" from about the age of two, when according to my mother, I stopped halfway up a hill we were climbing, and being very short and fat, declared, "Too big a walk for Dodo."

We kept it up on Jim for some time about his unparliamentary procedure in the debate. The only point I remember that Bee made was the statement that baker's bread was nothing but a crust with a lump of sour dough in the middle. It was Will who really excelled himself. He stood behind his counter, which he pounded at times to emphasize a point, and after a flow of oratory showing the weakness of some argument on our side, he would say, "I think we can allow that point cancelled." His attention to proper procedure made up for Jim's informal approach. He talked for nearly an

hour and I think was quite disappointed, as well he might be, when Mame gave the verdict as a tie, but of course she could hardly be expected to decide against her own sex.

After some months Will decided that his venture was not a success. He stored his remaining stock in his shack, sold his store building to a farmer who moved it away, and sought new experiences by getting a job as a section hand on the railroad.

Once when we were out of matches at home and no one was going to town for a few days, Chaddy and I were sent down to Will's shack to borrow some. He was away and the place was nailed up so we pried the window open with a sharp buffalo or cattle horn we found. We only took a few matches to tide us over, but we were, of course, guilty of "breaking and entering," and were told so by Will when we saw him and reported what we had done. I suppose we thought nothing of it for in those days people never locked their doors. Anyone going along a trail at mealtime could go into any shack and if the owner were away, cook himself a meal, provided he washed up afterwards.

If the train stopped at night up at the Parkhill crossing Mother would put a lamp in an upstairs window in case someone from the east, friend or stranger, had got off. By and by we would hear a knock at the door and Mother would be saying, "Come away in." Many a time Chaddy and I had to give up our own bed to an uninvited visitor while Mother made up a shakedown on the floor.

Will Rothwell was always a welcome guest as he was jolly and a good talker. He used to go to parties with the older members of the family. My chief cause for gratitude to him was that he lent me a complete edition of Shakespeare's plays. I used to pore over them at night by the coal-oil lamp, probably not taking in more than half of what I read. My favorite plays, as I recall, were "The Taming of the Shrew" and "King Lear," not exactly children's fare, but good stories. Later, when Will had proved up on his homestead and left the neighborhood, he gave me the book which I still treasure.

He went on to many other experiences including reporting for the Calgary Herald and later helping to promote the town of Bassano, for which he invented the slogan, "The best town by a dam-site." From there he and his wife, a

former Galt girl, went to Wardner, British Columbia, where he raised white-faced cattle and Christmas trees. Every Christmas he still writes to us and recalls with nostalgia the old homesteading days.

Another bachelor neighbor whom we kids liked much less, was Old Andrew Johnson. He too had come out from Galt in Mr. Patterson's group. He was reputed to be wealthy, but as has been said of others, he probably still had the first nickel he ever made. He had a long grey beard and his head wagged with a sort of palsy which gave him an air of deep deliberation. He walked with a stick and Father, taking pity on him, used to drive him around, and would send Chaddy and me down to his place to put in his potatoes and take them up in the fall. After we had toiled for hours, he would put his hand into his pocket and take out some silver, carefully sort it over and give us perhaps fifteen cents for a day's work.

We took great offence once when he arrived as Chaddy and I were down on our knees scrubbing the kitchen floor and feeling very virtuous. "Young ducks like to puddle," he said.

His father had been a Presbyterian minister, so he was the logical choice for Elder as soon as a Presbyterian church got started in the district. True to his upbringing, he kept the Sabbath Day with great strictness, and would not read a newspaper nor cook a hot meal on that day. He would eat one, though, at our place. Father always asked him to say grace when he was there, and this was a great ordeal for us kids, because it was such a long one, drawn out with such pious quaverings, that we always found it hard not to giggle. One day we finally exploded and were sent in disgrace from the table, which did not add to our affection for him.

In spite of his piety, old Andrew liked a nip of whiskey, and after a hotel was opened in Parkland, he would not only go in for a drink himself, but would so far overcome his natural parsimony as to ask some of the young men to have a drink with him. This outraged our mother, who was practically a teetotaler.

One Sunday old Andrew had such a bad cold that he

did not go to church. Our minister at that time was Rev. John Kennedy, a well-known pioneer himself. After the service, he called around to see Andrew.

"You should take a good hot drink of whiskey for that cold, Andrew," he said.

"I do," said Andrew, wagging his head, "I do."

After proving up on his homestead, Andrew moved into a small house in the village. He was a great Liberal, and when elections were on one year, Andrew was seen to invite some of the homesteaders into his house where a Liberal organizer was a guest. They all came out looking pleased. When the election returns for our district were known, it was whispered by the Conservatives, even by such a good friend of Andrew as my father, that each visitor had been given a dollar bill, not such a trifling amount to settlers in those days. But for the truth of this allegation I cannot vouch.

Andrew liked to go back to Ontario for the winter, and each time, our mother put up a huge lunch for him with ham, roast chicken and other good things that made us drool. Of course he never paid for this.

When he went east, Andrew never took a sleeper, but when Father and Mother finally felt they could afford to go back home and were taking a lower berth between them, Andrew decided to splurge and take the upper above them. When they came to pay for them, Andrew argued that since there were three of them, he should pay for only a third of the section and Father should pay two-thirds, though he and mother occupied only one berth. Even Father thought this was going too far. Needless to say, Mother provided lunch for all three.

Andrew has been with his forefathers these many long years, and I know I should speak no ill of the dead. I can only repeat, he was not a favorite of Chaddy's or mine.

Chapter 8

WE INCREASE OUR HERD

We hadn't had Roany very long before we had to admit that as a dairy cow she was something of a flop. The demand for butter exceeded the supply. For this we could not entirely blame her, as our healthy appetites would have taxed the production of most cows.

Father heard that there were some more cows for sale at Nanton and decided to buy two more while he had the chance. Our two older sisters, Winnie and Ethel, had decided to stay in Ontario for a year and go on working, and Ethel had sent Father the money to pay for one cow, which was a big help. So early one bright fall day when he and Jim set off for town with a load of baled hay, he told us he would be bringing the new cows home with him.

During the day Chaddy and I bustled about, bedding the cow-stable and filling the mangers with hay for the newcomers. They arrived at supper time and the family lined up to inspect them. They were red and white and almost alike except that the one had a white face. Both had been dehorned. They were sleek and pretty and made old Roany look quite rough and shaggy in comparison. Chaddy claimed the white-faced one and named her "Fanny Fern." The other was to be Ethel's and we called her "Lassie."

Annie Rooney was almost forgotten in the excitement over the newcomers, but I slipped into her stall and put my arm around her shaggy neck.

"Never mind, Roany. I love you best even if you did run away with me and I had to wade through the cold slough," I told her.

Next day the question of watering came up all over again. Roany could now be trusted to be driven to the spring without a leading rope, but the newcomers might wander away. Father and Jim had to leave early for town with another load of hay and Father wouldn't trust us to ride Dixie

when he wasn't there, so it was decided to lead them all. I went first with Roany to encourage the others to follow. Then came Chaddy with Fanny Fern and Mother with Lassie. Buckles trotted along looking important but keeping well out of reach of the heads of the cows.

All went well on the way down except that Roany broke away from me and took a short-cut just to show her independence of mind. She let me catch her again at the spring and after they had all had a drink, the little procession started for home.

We had reached the ridge less than a quarter of a mile from the buildings when Buckles, becoming too cock-sure, crossed the trail in front of Roany. She made a quick run at him and jerked the rope from my hand. Her big muley head just missed the dog who had to beat a hasty retreat with his tail between his legs, but yawned and stretched to show his unconcern, once he got to a safe distance. Roany then kicked up her heels in quite a kittenish way and barged down the hill. Chaddy and Mother had got ahead with their charges and did not see what had happened till Roany came dashing down on them. Fanny Fern and Lassie then gaily joined the frolic, and Mother and Chaddy were forced to speed up with them.

Buckles, seeing the enemy in flight, promptly paid off his score by nipping Roany from the rear, making her kick up her heels again and run still faster. The others kept up with her and from my position higher on the ridge I had brief glimpses of Mother's feet as they twinkled in and out below the long skirt that women wore then, as though in protest at the unusual pace they had to keep up.

Mother was not as slim as she had once been, but she held on and steered her ungainly animal through the gate. Then she sat down on the grass to catch her breath. Roany followed in, and Fanny Fern, seeing she was beaten, tossed her head, striking Chaddy with the sharp stump where her horn had been cut off. Chaddy screamed and dropped the rope, letting Fanny go past the gate and head for the trail to town, but I skipped down in time to head her off. Then we all stood in a panting group in the yard while Mother

declared she was past the age for sprinting and was through with watering cows.

After this, Father let the cattle out on the range to pasture in the daytime. They usually stayed pretty well in the neighborhood and were not too hard to find at milking time. As Louis Roy said, they had got "located." When Jim was not too busy he rode after them on Dixie, but often Chadey and I had to walk in search of them.

Buckles always went with us and made himself useful by driving off any range cattle that we happened to run into. We would stand at a safe distance and watch him darting here and there at the heels of the cattle, for he was a natural "heeler" and never ran at their heads. Back and forth he would go, a little black speck on the tawny prairie, till he had the whole bunch running from they scarcely knew what. Then he would come panting back to us for some well-deserved praise, and we would go on looking for our cows.

On these walks we nearly always found something new or interesting. One day we explored two rounded hills standing by themselves on the prairie north of our place. We had been told that these were called "buttes" but nobody seemed to know what had caused them. We thought they might have been built by the Mound Builders whom we had studied about in history, because on the top of them we found small stones arranged in strange shapes. But Jim said these were probably only the attempts of passing cowboys to leave their initials there, and rain and snow had disarranged the stones. On one of the buttes there was an oblong sunken place which we were sure must be an Indian grave, and we tried to get Jim to dig there to see if there were any Indian relics in it, but I think we were all a little nervous about what we might find.

A few years later Father bought this quarter, which was C.P.R. land, and we called it "Twin Butte Farm."

There was a large single butte on Billy Fisher's homestead east of us. It was called the "Nine Mile Butte" but I don't know what it was nine miles from. Being so conspicuous on the flat prairie, it served as a guide to travellers before roads were surveyed and fenced.

Sometimes we could not see the cows at all when we started

out. One day after a long search we came on them suddenly in a little coulee over near the railroad track, invisible till we were right on them. Here the pasture was a little better because the hollow had held the moisture longer and it sloped down to a slough. We were sure that when spring came there would be lots of flowers here. Roany had probably discovered the hideaway and had led the other cows to it, and we had often been completely baffled when they walked serenely in after we had travelled miles in search of them. We believed old Roany was just cunning enough to get them all to lie down so that they would be more completely hidden. There was an old cattle or buffalo trail through the hollow and buffalo wallows were scattered about.

The only drawbacks to these walks was that we were always afraid the coyotes would get Buckles. This, we heard, had been the sad fate of a neighbor's dog, and we thought if it happened to Buckles, life for us would not be worth living. So whenever a coyote came in sight, Buckles was immediately collared. If we hadn't anything to lead him by, we would pick him up in our arms and carry him, which was very awkward for him and us, and he would squirm and struggle to be free.

Often he was too quick for us and would be off after the coyote before we could catch him, and at such a time he was deaf to our whistles and calls. When he disappeared over a rise we would be in despair, as we were sure that the coyote had coaxed him away to where a pack of its relatives lay in wait to pounce on him without mercy.

We would run after him till our hearts pounded, picturing him being torn limb from limb by the heartless prairie wolves. When our feelings had been screwed to the top notch, Buckles would come loping leisurely back, to be hugged and scolded by his mistresses. He endured it all as a matter of course and trotted cheerfully along when it was over.

Chapter Nine

OUR FIRST SNOW AND FIRST PRAIRIE CHICKENS

One morning I was wakened by Chaddy jumping out of bed and yelling, "It's been snowing."

This was enough to waken even sleepy me, so I got up and went to the window too, and we stood looking wonderingly at the new scene before us. There were no dark landmarks to break the white expanse of snow — nothing but purity as far as we could see. To the west the white prairie merged into the white foothills, with the snow-covered Rockies towering over all and reflecting the colors of the rising sun.

We thought in a way it looked like a huge frosted cake with three storeys.

Our musings were interrupted by a loud bang from Jim's cubicle, followed by another. Then came excited shouts and the clatter of his hastily pulled on boots on the stairs. We rushed to his window and saw him run out to the haystack where he picked up two feathery speckled bodies that fluttered pitifully and dripped blood on the clean snow.

"I pinked them from my window," Jim shouted. "They were on the haystack. They must have taken shelter there from the storm."

He was jubilant over his success, and could hardly take time to eat his breakfast before he was off with his shotgun to look for more prairie chickens. Chaddy and I were sitting on the stack throwing snowballs down at the pigs and enjoying ourselves hugely when we saw him go by with his gun. We felt quite sad to think of the birds being shot, but the clear fresh air soon made our spirits rise and we forgot about the poor prairie chickens.

We gathered up handfuls of snow and threw them at Buckles, who would jump into the air and snap at them. This was his first experience of snow and he thought it was great fun. Later we made a big circle in the snow with spokes from the centre, and Buckles joined us in a wild game

of "fox and geese," in which I was usually the fox, puffing as I ran in a hopeless attempt to catch the two lively geese.

Buckles had to be ruled out of the game because he wouldn't stay in the circle, but he didn't mind this at all and rolled about in the snow barking with joy.

When at last we all sat down to rest, we noticed a strange dark archway of cloud in the west. This arch stretched above the mountains leaving a clear space of blue sky beneath, from the north to the extreme south.

Suddenly we felt a warm breath of air from the west, as if the baker of the big cake had opened his oven door and let out a puff of hot air.

This warm wind continued to blow and for a short time we had all the sparkling white freshness of winter combined with the warm breath of summer. Winter soon lost out, however, and the snow began to disappear. Soon the big cake was left quite brown and bare except for little patches of snow in the hollows.

We stared in surprise for a while and then we both shouted, "It's the Chinook!" for we remembered hearing that it would come even in mid-winter and take the snow away, so that the cattle and horses could get at the grass. At that moment we didn't have much sympathy for the poor cattle and horses, but felt quite vexed at losing our sport. Buckles too, seemed to miss the soft white stuff that was so good to play with. We needn't have worried. We were to have plenty more before the winter was over!

All the fun being ended, we started for the house. The exercise and the Chinook had heated us so that we took off our coats and carried them. Then Chaddy got the bright idea of dressing Buckles up in one of the coats. He submitted good-naturedly to being decked out in a tan-coloured coat with a little double cape around the neck. His front legs were put through the sleeves and the buttons fastened. The capes stuck up around his neck like the ruff on a circus dog and he looked so funny that we roared with laughter.

Just then a neighbor's dog appeared over the rise and in an instant Buckles was off to greet his visitor. His advances were meant to be purely friendly, but with his coat flying out behind, he was such a strange sight that the visitor put

his tail between his legs and fled. Now and then Buckles would step on the coat and tumble, but in spite of this he kept within a short distance of the other dog. They reached the woodpile and round and round it they went. Bee came to the back door and looked on in amazement.

The poor stranger was by this time so terrified that he was giving short yelps at every bound. The ground was wet and sticky from the melted snow and the coat was in a very bedraggled state by the time Bee finally caught Buckles and took it off him. We got a good scolding, but we did not mind very much, for the smell of the roasting prairie chickens came through the open door and as usual we were very hungry.

Chapter Ten

THE PHOTOGRAPHER COMES

The prairie chickens tasted as good as they smelled and all enjoyed them except for Mother who did not like the wild taste. Buckles picked the bones. While we were eating our dinner Father told us he had seen Ed Auclair and he was coming that afternoon to take a photograph of the farm buildings and all of us.

Edmond Auclair was a Frenchman who lived on a homestead about two miles south-east of us. He had been given the nickname of "Professor" because of his pedantic way of talking, for he never by any chance used a small word if he could find a large one to take its place.

He was tall and lanky with an oily brown skin, almost purple black hair, and a much-curved moustache. His eyes were rather small and dark and he blinked rapidly as he talked. On special occasions he donned a black suit with a Prince Albert coat, and was proudly conscious of his fine attire among the homesteaders in their workaday clothes. His only regret was that his old grey slouch hat did not live up to the suit, and his first act on meeting anyone was to apologize for his head-gear.

The professor lived by himself in a little shack on his homestead. The inside of this shack was usually cleaner than most bachelor homes because he had plenty of time to attend to his housework, as he kept no stock, and hired others to do the minimum amount of ploughing and other "improvements" needed to get his patent at the end of three years. The walls were covered with flowered wall-paper and decorated with pictures of stage beauties clipped from the San Francisco papers, as that was the place from which he had come.

The outer walls were covered with shingles instead of the usual ship-lap of most of the other shacks. Over the door he had printed a sign, "Sunny Slope Farm" and below



Edmond Auclair, first photographer in the Parkhill (now Parkland) district, Alberta. February 19, 1905.

this "Edmond Auclair — Photographer," for he eked out a scanty living by taking photographs of any homesteaders who could afford to pay. As a result, our district was one of the few to have its early settlers and their homes recorded for posterity.

To pass the long hours away, Ed did a great deal of reading, usually following some particular line of thought. For a time it was socialism. He read quantities of books and pamphlets on this subject. Then when he had absorbed as much as he could carry, he would call on his neighbors and give them the benefit of his research. He found it wasn't a popular subject with the homesteaders who were mostly of the rugged-individual type, and thought socialism meant taking all the wealth in the country and dividing it equally among the people. In a little while, they said, everything would be back just where it was before. So Ed usually ended up holding forth to Frank Auclair, who, besides being his long-suffering uncle, was his nearest neighbor. One day Frank, feeling he had endured as much as he could take, exploded and told his nephew he was "bug-house," a popular slang expression in those days.

The professor was shocked almost as much by his uncle's use of this vulgar word as by his opinion of him. His eyes blinked very fast while he told his uncle that in future he would leave him severely alone.

After this, to his uncle's vast relief, he shut himself up and passed a day or two by himself, but he soon found socialism boring when he had no one to argue with. Rooting through his papers for something to read, he came upon a pamphlet on "atheism" and this started him on a new train of thought.

So one clear autumn day when the sky curved like a bright blue bowl over the prairie, and the little brown prairie birds were heading in flocks for the south, back went Ed again to his uncle to prove to him that God did not exist.

Sometimes, tiring of his uncle's lack of enthusiasm, he would don his Prince Albert and go to the church service. After the meeting he would buttonhole the preacher, and engage him in a religious argument. The latter had a good

excuse to escape, as he had to get to Stavely and have his supper in time for an evening service there.

When the poor professor found that he did not get very far with the preacher, he stopped going to church and instead waited along the trail and attached himself to one or another of the families returning home from the service. This not only gave him a chance to air his views, but usually a good meal at the end, for the professor was reputed to have but poor fare at home. Louis Roy was sure he ate gophers, but no one had been able to prove this. When he went to town, instead of getting his dinner at the hotel as the other men did, for twenty-five cents was all it cost them for a full-course meal there, Ed carried his lunch with him, and the dry crusts could sometimes be seen sticking out of his pockets. So on Sundays, if he had an invitation, he always did full justice to the good meal set before him by the neighbor's wife.

After eating he would resume his theological argument. "If the bible is true, where did Cain get his wife?" he would ask. Mother just let him ramble on or "haver," as she would say, using one of the Scots words she was familiar with. "It pleases him and it doesn't hurt me," she would add as she went on with her work.

When we found he was coming to take pictures, Chaddy and I were quite excited. This was before we had such things as snapshots, and having your picture taken was quite an event. We kept looking across the prairie to see if he were coming, and soon saw his lanky figure striding along the trail, with his coat-tails flapping behind him.

Then the whole farm went into a state of action, for in those old-time photographs every person and every animal on the place had to be seen. We had to bring the cows in so that they would be in the picture. Winnie and Ethel, our two sisters still back in Galt, Aunt Mary and all the other relatives there simply had to see what Annie Rooney looked like. Buck and Queen were turned loose inside the yard and given oats on the ground to keep them quiet. Jim saddled and mounted Dixie and posed in the foreground complete with sombrero and rope. The rest of the family grouped

themselves in front of the house according to directions from the professor as he emerged from time to time from under the dark cloth of his camera on its tall tripod.

"My, but the folks will think Dod has certainly got fat when they see the picture," called Jim.

Being fat was a sore point with me and Jim knew it. I immediately flew into a temper.

"You eat so much you get thin carrying it around," I shouted back angrily, and then ran weeping into the house. Mother coaxed me out again but my red swollen eyes and rumpled hair didn't improve my looks.

All was now in readiness, even to the new kitten playing beside the front step. Then Buckles got impatient for a run with Dixie and began to jump up and down excitedly.

"Sit down," Jim shouted, and Buckles obediently squatted down with his back to the camera just at the moment the picture was taken.

A few days later the professor brought over the finished photograph and we all gathered eagerly around to have a look at it.

There was the house looking plain and unadorned, the stable, and the other little building which was sure to appear in all the pictures we took. There was Buckles with his back to the camera, Dixie with arched neck and Jim proudly in the saddle, while Bee reclined gracefully on the front doorstep. Father posed as the landed proprietor, with Mother nearby. Chaddy stood rather belligerently in the foreground, and while I looked as broad as I was long, no one would have noticed that my eyes were swollen.

The grind-stone and the wood-pile were near the house and the manure-pile near the stable, but suddenly I realized there was something missing.

"Annie Rooney isn't there! Oh the mean old professor to leave old Roany out!"

Sure enough, Buck and Queen were where they should be, Fanny Fern and Lassie were eating at the haystack. We could make out the pigs and the odd hen, but not a sign of Roany was to be seen. At the last moment she had taken it into her stubborn head to go behind the stack, so Winnie

and Ethel would have to wait till they came west to see what she looked like after all.

Chapter Eleven

WE ALL HAD OUR CHORES TO DO

Not having any school to attend gave Chaddy and me a lot of time to fool around with our own interests and fun, but as time went on and the farm developed more, we were called on to do more around the place. If you don't want to have to do a thing, it is a good idea not to learn how to do it. We found this out about milking. Bee and Jim never learned to milk a cow and never had to do it, and once the novelty was over for Chaddy and me, we sometimes wished we hadn't learned either.

On the whole, though, we rather enjoyed it. On a cool fall or winter night it was cozy sitting with your head burrowed into the cow's flank, listening to the sound of the milk streaming into the pail, at first with a hard, metallic noise as it hit the empty bottom, then soft and churning as the depth increased and a soft foam formed over the top.

As our cats increased in number they would sit and wait for their saucer of new milk, and we would amuse ourselves by squirting a stream of milk at them which they became quite clever at sitting up and catching in their mouths.

Chaddy and I would talk back and forward to each other about all sorts of things. I remember a long discussion we had one night about the animals in Noah's ark, and the difficulty of feeding them all, which made us feel slightly skeptical of the tale, though we never seriously doubted its truth at that time.

We often sang together, keeping time with the milking, songs we had learned at school or from Mother. "Just a Song at Twilight" was a favorite. If we liked the words of a poem and didn't know a tune to them, I would make one up. I remember composing one for Moore's "Minstrel Boy," and years after we finally learned the proper air for it, my tune seemed to belong to it more. The cows seemed

to like our singing and would stand with half-shut eyes chewing their cud. It was many years later that a firm manufacturing evaporated milk introduced radio music into their stables and coined the slogan "Milk from contented cows." Still, we like to think it was our idea first.

We had no cream separator then, of course, and no refrigeration. The milk was kept in shallow pans on a table in our makeshift cellar. The cream was skimmed from these and kept in a crock till we had enough for a churning. As I mentioned before, this was a job I was learning to help with. We had an old-fashioned dash-churn, not quite as crude as the one in Millet's painting but the same idea. It was rather a tedious job, for if the cream was too cold, the butter would be forever and a day in coming. In summer time, however, it would often come too quickly and be too soft to handle. Mother would work the buttermilk out of the butter in a big wooden bowl with a wooden butter spoon, and sometimes if the butter was very firm she would use her hands. She would estimate the number of pounds and a tablespoon of salt for each pound and work this in. Then she would pack it into the pound-size butter mold and press it out onto a big platter. The pounds looked very nice with the pattern of the print on top of each.

Later on we got a barrel churn which turned round and round on a frame and was worked by a hand lever aided by a pedal. One could get much more power with this foot arrangement and it had the added advantage of leaving one hand free to hold a book. One could get quite a bit of reading done while the churn went round and round. One had to stop occasionally in the first few rounds and pull the plug out to let the gas escape, or it might blow out and there would be cream flying through the air. It was easy to tell when the butter had arrived, for there was a new thumping sound, and the glass peephole on the top of the churn showed clear.

Though I never did much with the poultry except to hunt for the eggs, I always enjoyed the dairy work. When we finally got a cream-separator, I learned to put it together and run the milk through it, and it became so automatic

that years later when I would come home from university for my summer holidays, I could come in with the milk and assemble the separator parts in the summer twilight without bothering with a lamp.

A job I always liked in winter was to hold the lantern for Father while he did up the nightly chores. Even in the coldest weather the breath from the horses and cows and the heat from their bodies made the stable with its single thickness of boards feel warm. Father was kind to his stock and before we had any straw from threshed grain he would scatter what hay he could afford, to make a bed for them, after filling their mangers. There was always a sweet scent from this dried prairie grass. Buckles and Laddie the cat and later other cats that we owned would snuggle down together under the hay in the entry, though they would have preferred being left in the house over-night. The lantern made a small yellow light as I followed Father about, and the animals made dark shadows where they stood. Father would have a pat and a kind word for each horse and they would often give a little whinny as he came up beside them. When everything was done, we would hook the doors and go into the house, feeling that our "beasts" were warm and well-fed for the night.

Work we did not enjoy so well was picking stones. Father had by chance filed on a stony homestead, and before the land could be ploughed, as many stones as possible had to be removed. I was always a bit of a feminist and I had a strong feeling that picking stones was not a girl's work. Father had other ideas and so we all had to rally round, that is, all except Bee. She was a good cook and housekeeper and so was allowed to stay in and get the meals. Mother would rather be outside anyway. She always thought cooking was an awful waste of time, as you worked so hard only to have everything gobbled up in a hurry, and then you had to start all over again.

Father would mark off a "land" or strip to be ploughed, and Jim would go over this for some days with a pick and crowbar, digging out what stones could be seen near the surface. After he had a good start, we went out with Buck

and Queen and the wagon, picked up the stones and threw them in. Mother and Chaddy worked as a team on one side and Father and I on the other. He always said I was the best worker once he got me started, but this may have been mere flattery to spur me on. As I was quite fat, it was more effort for me than for Chaddy to bend down and then straighten up, toss the stone and bend again. It looked like a good reducing exercise, but it never seemed to have much effect.

We never piled such a heavy load that we could not climb on top and have a ride to the stone-pile where we unloaded them. This was a hollow in what Father afterwards fenced for our pasture field. It was rather fun to stand on the load and throw the stones onto the pile, where they made loud cracks like pistol shots. Father would say, "The Ellisons will say we are working hard today!" I think there must still be enough stones in this pile to build a house.

We would ride back sitting on the floor of the empty wagon, a ride we all enjoyed after our strenuous work. Father always stood up to drive and kept his balance without any trouble. But one day when he was busy with something else on the farm, he got Mother to drive the team out. Mother was game for anything and she decided to stand up to drive as Father did. With the first bump she lost her balance and down she went on her back on the floor of the wagon. She held on to the lines, but could not see to steer and the horses went round and round in a circle. Mother kept wailing for Father, "George! George!" but we were all laughing so hard at first that no one came to her rescue. When she was finally righted, she gave us a piece of her mind, but she laughed too.

The best part of picking stones was when we came in for dinner and smelled the bacon and other good things Bee had been cooking. Everything tasted good after our exercise in the fresh air.

Of course picking stones was a perennial job. Every time Father marked out a new land, we had to go at it again, and even after the farm was broken, stones kept cropping up every year, and it was much more disagreeable plodding

through the dusty, cultivated fields than over the prairie grass with its sweet scent. Sometimes we used to think with a thrill how we were the very first human beings to disturb its surface in all the centuries since the Ice Age, for the Indians and cowboys merely passed over it.

It was a common saying that a stony farm would be free of early frosts, and that turned out to be true in our case, but we needed some compensation for our long hours of toil.

Another perennial job that we had was hauling the household water from the spring. Father had tried digging wells at several places near the house, but they all proved dry, and in those early days, at least in our district, well-drilling outfits were unknown. We did get water half-way up the slope to the ridge behind the stable and Father had it curbed and a top put on, but the water had a strange mineral taste, and as it had to be hauled up by a rope and pail and carried a long way, it was only used when we ran short. The only thing left was to haul our water from the spring in barrels on a stone-boat.

For the benefit of anyone who doesn't know, a stone-boat was a flat, sled-like, all-purpose vehicle used on the homestead for hauling anything, and then in winter time fitted up with seats and used as a sleigh to take the family out.

As the spring was lower than the land where the stone-boat stood, two always had to go for water, one to dip the pail into the spring and hand it up to the one above, who emptied it into the barrel and handed the pail back. We always took two barrels, so it was quite a job to fill them both, especially for me, as my arms were short and it was a real lift for them.

When the barrels were filled, we covered them with gunny-sacks held down by hoops. Coming home we had to stand up, and I would hold on to the rim of a barrel to steady me. I well remember one bitter day when Jim and I had gone for water. Any badger-hole or other bump would make the water slop over onto me. The horses were cold and rather skittish from lack of exercise. In a rough place

they made a sudden bound and I was completely drenched. By the time we got home the water had frozen on my clothes, and it felt very good to get into the warm kitchen and have Mother's help and sympathy.

In the cold weather the water would have frozen solid if the barrel had been left outside, so it had to be carried by pailfuls in to another barrel in the corner of the kitchen. In summer-time even though it stood out on the north side of the house, it soon became warm and flat and after a few days was not very pleasant to drink.

Because it had to be brought so far, it was always impressed upon us that we mustn't waste a drop. Washing clothes, scrubbing, doing dishes or even washing ourselves had to be done with the smallest amount of water possible. When Mother would tell Father we were out of water, he would say, "What did you do with the two barrels we brought you last Friday?" or whenever it was.

A few years later Father felt he could afford to have a well drilled. They went down over 200 feet with only a trickle of water to show for all the expense.

Finally Father heard of a man who could "witch" for water, or who is sometimes referred to as a "water-diviner" or "dowser." The term to "witch for water" is said to come from the fact that it was usually done with a witch-hazel wand. The witcher would walk up and down in the general area where a well was needed, with the ends of a forked hazel twig held firmly in his hands, and the fork pointing ahead. If he passed over an underground spring or stream, the twig would turn in his hands and point downward.

Our witcher, Mr. Jewell from Nanton, used a willow fork or even one made of wire, there being no witch-hazels in the neighborhood. He walked all over the house yard and stable yard where Father had hoped to get water, but with no sign from his divining-rod. We all followed him about, watching hopefully. Then he went off in another direction, at right angles to the house, and suddenly his fork turned in his hands and pointed downwards. He went back and forth and came at it from all sides with the same result.

"Drill there," he said, "and you'll get water."

Father wanted to try holding the fork and he did, but it would not work for him, which made him very skeptical. But Mother tried and it turned so hard she couldn't hold it back, so she was quite convinced, especially when she thought of that water-barrel.

Father did drill there and got a good well. He was disappointed because it was such a distance from the stable, but he ran a pipe to the watering trough. Mother and we girls were glad it was no further from the house as we had most of the water to carry. Father had been brought up on an Ontario farm among several sisters and he accepted it as the natural thing that Grandma or Aunt Lizzie or some other female should carry the water in pails up the long hill from the spring to the house. So he told us we were lucky that we had such a short distance to carry it.

Years later when Father and Mother retired to the city, Mother said the thing she enjoyed most was the running water. It was wonderful by merely turning a tap to have as much water as she wanted for baths or wash-day, while the rest of the bathroom plumbing was a far cry from the outdoor privy on the homestead. Father and Jim had built it in the most wind-swept spot in the yard on a little knoll, so that besides being conspicuous, it was quite a distance to go on a wintry day and was bleak and chilly inside.

To cover the cracks and improve the appearance we papered the walls with picture supplements from the farm papers. Ethel added a drawing she made of Jim one cold day when he made his way there with Chaddy's red tam-o'-shanter pulled down on his red pow, his hands in his pockets, while he whistled "Home, Sweet Home." In her drawing, Ethel showed the notes emerging from his puckered lips. Chick Evans' "Specialist" wasn't around when this place was built.

Besides our various chores, Mother tried to get us to do a certain amount of studying. We had slates that we had brought from Galt, for these were still used in the best circles and saved a lot of paper. Mother had been a teacher before she married Father, and she would give us spelling and exercises in arithmetic to do on our slates. I remember she taught me decimals and percentage. She also decided I

should begin to learn algebra and started me on Jim's high school text. She was quick at most things herself and lost her patience if one didn't see through them at once. I remember a page of factoring problems where I bogged down for a long time and even shed a few tears over it, so that it became dirty and smudged. I preferred writing compositions or analyzing sentences in grammar. The latter were easy for me as our Ontario teachers had emphasized grammar. I still think it gives one a better knowledge and appreciation of our language than one would otherwise have, just as a study of anatomy and bone structure helps an artist in painting the human form.

We didn't spend very much time on our lessons as Mother was too busy to bother much with them, especially when we were so clever at evading them. She started me on knitting, using large wooden needles and carpet rags. These were the torn strips of discarded garments which, in Ontario, used to be sewed together, rolled into big balls and taken to a weaver to be woven into carpets. Most of our carpets were of this type. My effort was a small rug for the front of the bed, and it was quite colorful and useful, and not difficult enough to discourage me.

Chaddy was started on a quilt in blocks made of nine patches of alternating light and dark print. Our neighbor, Mrs. Linton, showed her how to sew these patches together, not in a running stitch but in a neat over-and-over seam, and gave her some old-fashioned lilac print to put the blocks together with. Neither of them ever thought that in the years to come Mrs. Linton would be Chaddy's mother-in-law, and the pieced quilt would form part of her wedding furnishing. Chaddy was a much neater sewer than I. Mother always said that the stitches in my dolls' clothes hardly held them together, but I was much more daring than Chaddy about designing costumes and making hats for the dolls. I would copy them from fashion sheets, using chicken feathers which I would curl in imitation of the ostrich plumes so much worn by ladies of that day.

Chapter Twelve

WE MADE OUR OWN FUN

As winter set in in earnest, we had plenty of time on our hands, as there wasn't so much doing on the farm then. We went skating for the first time on a slough near Louis Roy's place. It was surrounded by sloping banks which made it good for sleigh-riding as well as skating. Bee and Chaddy and I walked down, pulling our little hand-sleigh and with our skates slung over our shoulders. The skates we wore in those days were not screwed on to boots but were called "spring skates" and were adjusted by nuts and bolts to fit our shoes and then clamped on, while skate straps came up from the heel, around the ankles and buckled over our in-step.

The ice in the centre of the slough was not good, as the grass had grown tall there and stood above the ice, so we skated around the edge. Bee was a graceful skater but Chaddy and I were not very steady on our skates and took plenty of tumbles. If we were coming toward each other, we couldn't stop nor steer clear of each other quickly enough to avoid a collision, and down we would go.

Finally Chaddy's ankles got so tired that she undid her skates and began sleigh-riding down the hill. The two dogs, Buckles and Louis' Curly, had followed us and they came bounding down after her, Buckles leaping easily through the snow, and Curly puffing and barking in the rear. Chaddy caught Curly and got him to sit up and beg. Then she stuck her red tam jauntily on the side of his head and hung her skates around his neck. He looked so sporty that she shouted with laughter.

I was on the other side of the slough and in my hurry to see what was going on, I didn't take time to go around but cut across the centre of the slough. I was almost through the grassy part when the ice gave way and I sank knee-deep in the cold muddy water. Bee and Chaddy soon pulled me

out and we headed for home, with me shivering and chattering over the mile or so of snowy prairie.

By the time we got there my stockings were frozen on my legs, but Mother had a good fire going in the kitchen, and came to my rescue again with dry stockings and shoes. I soon got warm and had no bad after effects from my mishap.

Jim and the Linton boys and others got a good sheet of ice cleared on Mosquito Creek and even played a sort of hockey there. Most of the boys had horses, but it was so far for us girls to walk that we were cold before we even started to skate.

Most of our skates were pretty dull and Jim invented a way of sharpening them. He fitted up a wooden box with a big wheel attached by a belt to a smaller wheel, and this one to a tiny emery wheel, so that one revolution of the big wheel made the tiny one revolve very swiftly.

Instead of turning the contrivance by hand, he attached it to the big wheel of Mother's sewing-machine, after throwing the machine out of gear. Then he got Chaddy and me to take turns sitting down and working the treadle with our feet as hard as we could go. He promised us if we did this, he would sharpen our skates free, while all the boys had to pay twenty-five cents each, a phenomenal sum to us all then. So we pedalled like mad, the wheels whirred, and the sparks flew from the emery-wheel's contact with the skates.

Such speed would make what Jim called a "hot-box" where the axle fitted into the wood, and Jim would slather dripping or even butter on for lubrication. The room would be full of smoke and noise. Mother never worried how much noise or confusion we made as long as we were happily occupied and cleared things up before Father came in for his supper. The boys were all fascinated by the machine, and Jim had plenty of customers, but by the time he got round to sharpening our skates it was nearly spring and the ice was melting, so we lost out on the proposition.

The skate-sharpener wasn't Jim's first invention. Once before we came West he had invented a small separator that would thresh Mother's beans and peas. He had used Mother's

sewing-machine run by our older sisters for power then, so it was old stuff for him.

A game Jim invented provided him and Chaddy and me with fun and excitement for many a wintry hour. We had got Mother and all the women of the neighborhood to save their empty spools for us, and these we made into armies of soldiers. Their only uniforms were cardboard head-dresses which we made and colored with crayons to represent different busbies, bear-skins etc. Only the officers had these as it took too long to make them for all the men.

Jim always used all the tall ruddy-colored spools for his Highland regiment, but gave us all the little white spools and the black ones. We pulled out the extension table as far as it would go and Jim sat at one end and Chaddy and I at the other, as Jim patronizingly said he could take us both on.

We drew up our men in the traditional British squares with the officers in their tall head-gear in front. Our ammunition was dominoes which we would flip between thumb and middle finger down the length of the table at each other's men. For artillery we had a few little metal wheels, I think small pulleys, but when Chaddy and I tried to flip them, they raised blood blisters on our fingers. Jim, however, could send one crashing into our men causing great devastation, like a regular block-buster.

"Down with the aristocracy!" he would shout.

After a heavy bombardment, he would call out in sombre tone, "Pick up your dead!" Once a spool was knocked over, he was considered dead, so we would gather up all the fallen and toss them into tin biscuit boxes that we kept beside us at the ends of the table. We would rearrange our decimated squares, and Jim had a mean trick of marching out a whole fresh regiment from behind his biscuit box, where he had kept it in secret reserve.

He always won, whatever the odds were in numbers when we started. The noise was terrific and Father could not stand it for very long, though it never worried Mother.

This game might be condemned today as fostering a militaristic spirit in us, but three less war-like people than we grew up to be would be hard to find.

There were other quieter, more conventional games that we used to play on winter evenings. I suppose if someone from the train a mile or so away had seen the light from our little coal-oil lamp glimmering across the bare, snow-covered prairie, they would have felt very sorry for us and thought we lived a very lonely, barren life. But it never occurred to us to feel sorry for ourselves.

Supper always tasted especially good by lamplight in the cozy kitchen. After the dishes were finished and the chores done, we would gather around the table again. Usually there would be some game going: crokinole, dominoes, authors, flinch and parchesi. I mentioned earlier how young Jack Ellison used to walk up at night and play these games with us. I remember how much fun we used to have setting each other back at parchesi, and how we would laugh at Jack's witty remarks in his Lancashire tongue.

We all played cards, euchre being Father's favorite, while we young people and our friends liked pedro best. Whist was played too and 500 gradually became popular, but bridge had not yet come into its own. We had a game called "lost heir" which Chaddy and I especially enjoyed. It was called "Methodist pedro" because Methodists who were forbidden to play cards, were allowed to play it, although it was practically the same game as pedro. The only difference was that it was played with cards having the names of Canadian cities: Toronto, Halifax, Montreal and Winnipeg, instead of hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades. This made it an innocent pastime in the eyes of parents who regarded playing-cards as instruments of the devil. Our parents had no such inhibitions. Father said Mother taught him to play cards after they were married, but he proved an apt pupil, so much so that he was still playing a good game of contract bridge when his eyesight failed him, on in his 80's. Chaddy took to cards early and was always a good player. I recall one night when Mother had put a lamp in an upstairs window to guide someone home, there was an unusual noise up there and one of the family said, "The lamp has exploded!" We all rushed outside, all but Chaddy. Looking up at the window we could see there was nothing wrong with the

lamp, and when we came back in after the false alarm, there was Chaddy sitting playing her game of solitaire, so engrossed that she had paid no attention to all the excitement.

Still, she liked "lost heir" as well as I did and many an hour we whiled away playing it, so much so that the cards eventually wore out. As we had no money to buy a new set and no place to buy them, we decided to make them ourselves. We cut the cards out of empty cereal and other boxes, then painstakingly printed the names of the cities and the numbers with coloured crayons. We even copied the pictures of the "lost heir" and the wrong boy" on their respective cards. (According to the rules, if you get the lost heir in a trick it gave you a bonus of 3, but the wrong boy set you back 5.) The chief trouble with our home-made deck was that the cards were so thick it made shuffling very awkward, but Mother had a Scottish saying she consoled us with. She said we were "like the guid wife who took such as she had and never wanted."

We had a very nice checker-board which Jim had made by hand, but Chaddy and I never got to be very good at the game. We must have come by this naturally, for Louis Roy could beat Father without half trying. He had probably played it a great deal in the lumber camps.

Another of our home-made amusements was the making of scrapbooks. We had no way of getting the ready-bound type that children buy today for their various enterprises. There was a roll or two of grey building paper left by the men after they had papered the walls of our house between the studs. It had a rough but rather attractive texture. We cut out enough double sheets from the roll for a book, folded them in two and sewed them down the centre with linen thread.

It took quite a bit of accuracy in measuring and cutting to get the sheets all the same. The cutting out of pictures from old magazines was the most enjoyable part of the whole thing. We were both interested in pictures of animals, and we also liked those of children and of farm scenes, jokes that seemed funny to us, and even pictures of actresses, for in those pre-moving-picture days, the magazines used to

have theatre sections showing the popular actresses of the day—actors too, but we were not specially interested in them. We loved the beautiful low-necked gowns and the elaborate hair styles of these ladies of the stage over half-a-century ago. I became so enamoured that I devoted a whole scrap-book to them alone, with the title "Types of Fair Women" lettered boldly on the cover. I still have this book, and the dresses still seem beautiful to me.

Unfortunately I cut the names of the actresses off so that now I can only guess at the identity of Ellen Terry, Ethel Barrymore, Maxine and Gertrude Elliott or Mrs. Fiske, for if some obscure but lovely chorus-girl took my fancy, I impartially gave her a place beside the great ones. How surprised these glamorous ladies would have been to see two children who had never been at a theatrical performance in their lives, poring over their pictures in the crude kitchen of a homestead thousands of miles away on the Alberta prairie!

Mother showed us how to make our own paste by mixing a little flour with cold water till smooth, adding hot water and then cooking till thick. This we put on with a rag, as we had no brushes, and sometimes the pictures wrinkled, but a heavy book set on top pressed these out. Mother was resourceful herself and encouraged us to be so.

Chapter Thirteen

WE WERE OMNIVOROUS READERS

Reading, of course, was one of our main diversions, especially in the long winter evenings. We were all, except Father, omnivorous readers. He read all the weekly papers we got, in fact we all fell upon them when someone brought the mail. There was the Nanton News, the Calgary Herald and later the News Telegram, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Winnipeg Telegram (to counteract the Liberal tone of the former) and that old favorite, the Family Herald and Weekly Star. Father read the news, especially in the political field, and the farming sections. We all followed the course of the Russo-Japanese War which was being waged at this time, 1904-5.

There was always a "Woman's Department" with recipes, fashions, fancy-work and household hints, but Mother and Bee enjoyed the fiction too, as did Jim and Chaddy and I. I remember the Family Herald ran "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" over quite a long period, and it was a race to see who got it first each week. Most of the papers published what were called the "Funny Papers" then, and I must confess Chaddy and I enjoyed them. I know the "comics" are frowned upon now and are said to have an evil effect on children, but I can't think of any harm they did us. Of course they were not "crime comics." The Free Press always had a full page of the doings of Buster Brown and his friend Mary Jane. Their style of clothes set the fashion for a generation of little boys and girls. Another favorite of ours was Happy Hooligan, an innocent character who always got into trouble in spite of the best intentions. The Katzenjammer Kids were running even then, and I'm afraid we found them very amusing, as when, after one of their pranks, the Captain laid them across his knee and spanked them, afterwards saying, "Exercise! Dot's vot I needed!"

Chaddy and I always read the various "Children's Corners," and I, at least, occasionally contributed to them.

Farmers' Advocate which we subscribed to, had one conducted by "Cousin Dorothy." "Dear Cousin Dorothy," we wrote. I even went so far as to write a story about Annie Rooney and send it in. To my great joy and pride, it was published, with a little note of praise by Cousin Dorothy. This story bore fruit in the form of a pen pal, Sybil Gibbon, who lived at Holland, Manitoba. She was much older than I was, practically grown up, in my eyes, but she was interested in animals and in writing and we exchanged information about our pets. Then her sister Muriel began to write to Chaddy. They were English and highly connected in army and church circles back home. One of their ancestors is portrayed in Benjamin West's painting "The Death of Wolfe." However, the girls' father was, I think, a sort of remittance man and they had quite a hard time of it on an isolated farm.

The girls had been taught by their mother, and Muriel had a natural gift for painting and drawing. She did animals especially well, and we received examples of her work. Sybil married fairly soon and became engrossed in her home and family, so that our correspondence ended. Jim used to refer to her always as "Gibble Sibbon" just to annoy me. Muriel married later too, but she continued to write to us, and some fifty years after my cow story appeared, she and her husband came to see us.

Encouraged by my first venture in fiction, I wrote a story about a gopher, which I sent to the Prairie Chicken Club, a children's corner in the Winnipeg Telegram. It too was published, and the editor sent me a membership button with a picture of a prairie chicken on it, and a letter saying that when I became famous, they would all be proud that one of my first stories appeared on this page. I was greatly thrilled, but alas, the editor's kindly prophecy has never been fulfilled.

Our sisters Winnie and Ethel, still in Galt, sent us "The Designer" and "The Ladies' Home Journal" regularly. These were like manna from heaven to Mother and Bee, and to Chaddy and me too, bringing to us, far on the western plains, a glimpse of the world of shops and fashions, and

coloured illustrations of Gibson Girls with high pompadours and shirtwaist dresses. There were always a number of short stories as well as one or two serials running, and we could hardly wait from month to month for the next instalments.

I remember a continued story in the "Ladies' Home Journal," "The Millionaire Baby" by Anna Katherine Green, that American pioneer in who-done-its. What a thriller this was, and what a race to get it first! There were also stories by C. N. and A. M. Williamson with reckless young women rushing romantically about in the high motor cars of an early date, wearing motor veils tied down over their hats, goggles and long dusters.

One story in "The Designer" that Bee enjoyed especially was "Miss Ginter of Ginterville." It was about a New England spinster, an aristocrat who had fallen upon hard times. She lived in the old family mansion with an elderly hand-maiden, and together they turned a bold front to the world. When the lace curtains in the parlor began to disintegrate with age, they stuck the rents together with starch. When Miss Ginter had to have a new dress and there was no money to buy material, they made one out of a sheet, and always referred to it as her "sheet" dress. Miss Ginter was full of sayings which we thought very pithy, such as "God help the rich, I say. The poor can beg or take in washing."

When we had read all the fiction, we would turn to the articles. There was a monthly feature in the "Ladies' Home Journal," "The Ideas of a Plain Country Woman." We thought her very profound. There were book talks by Hamilton W. Mabie, and editorials by Edward Bok. I remember too a series on "Good Taste and Bad Taste." The one on furniture showed illustrations of bad taste with all sorts of carvings and curlicues, while under "good taste" were pictured sideboards, tables, sofas and chairs, all in the severe Mission furniture so popular at that time. We read everything from cover to cover, for we were print hungry, and I suppose I remember all these little details because we had so few outside interests to distract us.

Fortunately for us, when we came out west an English friend of Mother's had given her boxes and boxes of back

issues of magazines: "The Strand," "Pall Mall," "Munsey Magazine" and others. We kept the boxes under the bed, as there was so little storage space, and we would haul them out on a dull afternoon, and I at least would read and read and read. It was either "Pall Mall" or "The Strand," or perhaps both which carried the delightful E. Nesbit stories of the Bastable children and their adventures as treasure seekers. The illustrations, which were exactly right, showed the girls in Mother Hubbard dresses and pinafores and the boys in jackets and knickers. How pleased I was years later when I came to work in the children's department of the Calgary Public Library to find all these and other stories by E. Nesbit on the shelves. They have become children's classics and are still read by boys and girls today.

The Munsey Magazines introduced me to the sophisticated world of New York at the turn of the century. I steeped myself in it till Tiffany's, Fifth Avenue, Delmonico's, the brownstone mansions of the Vanderbilts and their ilk, seemed as real to me as Nanton. Most of the pictures I have already mentioned of beautiful actresses and society women with their wasp waists and snowy shoulders daringly displayed, were clipped from these magazines to grace our scrapbooks.

Besides the papers and magazines, there were always books. Everyone in the district who had books shared them with everyone else. Jim had brought out his favorites, Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales" and the Henty books. He also had "The Young Marooners," a thrilling tale of some boys whose boat was carried off to sea by a devil-fish, and all the adventures that befell them. This book was lent around until it finally went to pieces.

Another favorite of ours which we and the neighbors to whom we lent it read to tatters was Owen Wister's great western story "The Virginian." We read it over and over till we had practically memorized passages. "When you say that, smile," we would say on suitable occasions, or "Ma'am, your towel has been too popular." We considered the chapter on Em'ly, the hen, the height of comedy, and the love affair of Molly Stark Wood and The Virginian, the tenderest of romances.

Mame Linton lent us many of the best sellers of that day such as the novels of Ralph Connor, Marie Corelli and the American Winston Churchill whose titles always began with a "C," "Coniston," "The Crisis" etc.

The family would sit around the table on a wintry night, everyone reading by the single coal-oil lamp in the centre of the table. The print and paper were often poor compared with that of today, but none of us complained about our eyes. There was one memorable night when the coal-oil gave out when most of us had chapters we just had to finish. We had laid in a stock of what we called "eight day" sulphur matches because they took so long to light. This night we took turns pressing several of these down at a time on the hot stove, where they flared up into little torches and made enough light for the rest to read by, and we all finished our chapters.

Sometimes Mother read aloud and everyone, especially Father, enjoyed this, for she was an excellent reader with a pleasant clear voice which still had a trace of her Scottish mother tongue. She also showed the training she had received in the girls' department of the famous Tassie Grammar School in Galt, and in the old Toronto Normal School.

Chaddy and I sometimes took a whirl at reading aloud to each other but only in the privacy of our own carpet-enclosed cubicle upstairs, or in a favorite retreat in fine weather, the top of a haystack near the stable. Ethel had given Chaddy a copy of "Grimms' Fairy Tales" to read on the train coming out west, and it was one of the books we practically wore out. We would take turns, each enduring the other's turn so that she might have a chance to read a story of her own choice.

Two books that we thought screamingly funny were "Helen's Babies" by Habberton and "Wee MacGreigor" by J. J. Bell. We would laugh just as hard at each reading of the naughty tricks Budge and Toddy played on their bachelor uncle, as we did the first time we read "Helen's Babies." We couldn't pronounce the Scottish words in "Wee MacGreigor" the way Mother could, but we knew their meaning and were

not too critical of each other's performance. We just wanted to get to our own favorite chapter.

We also read poetry. Ethel had won Longfellow's poems as a prize and they lent themselves to reading aloud, especially the rhythmic "Hiawatha." Chaddy also liked to read "My Lost Youth," I think because of the refrain,

"A boy's will is the wind's will,

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

We also read from one of Mother's school prizes, "1001 Gems of English Poetry." Browning's "Pied Piper" was a favorite here.

Mother had a number of prize books including Scott's poems, and I remember finishing reading "Marmion" one night after everyone had gone to bed. The wind was howling around the house which added horror to the gruesome part where the nun was walled up alive in her cell. I crept shivering to bed. I wonder that Father let me stay up so late, for I remember one night when he made Chaddy go to bed, and she burst into tears, because she was reading "Little Women" and had just got to Beth's death.

Besides Mother's prize books, we read her old readers, and those of our older sisters and Jim. I read Jim's "High School History of England" too, a fat old book by, I think Arabella Buckley. I read it till it fell apart, and I have never been able to find it in a second-hand book-store, but as I remember, it gave a rather muddled but interesting account of the doings of the kings and queens of England, the sort of things that Sellars takes off in his amusing book "1066 and All That."

As I said, I would read anything, or try to, but "Tom Brown at Oxford" by Thomas Hughes depicted a life too remote for me to make much of. There was another dreary book, "Children of the Abbey" that I never could get through.

We devoured love stories such as "Beverly of Graustark" and the novels of Robert W. Chambers if they came our way. I do remember Mother's confiscating one paper-back someone had lent us. It was called "The Phantom Wedding" and was the story of twin girls, Theodora and Dorothea. I

hadn't got very far in it when Mother took it away, so that I never did know how it all turned out.

Chapter Fourteen

WE MADE OUR OWN MUSIC

A great status symbol in our neighborhood was the owning of a piano. One of the first things Mrs. Norval Wilson asked us when she came to call on us was, "Have you got an instrument?" By "instrument" she meant a piano, and I'm sure we dropped several notches in the social scale when we had to admit we hadn't.

The church services were held at the Wilsons' home and later at the Lintons' because they each owned an "instrument." We were not, however, completely lacking for music though our instruments were smaller and humbler. Jim had a violin, usually referred to by us as his fiddle. Father had bought it for him a year or so before we came west. He wasn't given any lessons as we could not afford them, and besides, Father's brothers and cousins had all played the fiddle by ear. His brother Charlie and his cousin Alex Thomson used to play at dances, and his cousin Dr. Wat Thomson could play when he was so small his feet didn't touch the floor and he had to rest them on the rungs of the chair. Mother's father had no ear for music but he had skilful hands, and he used to make violins, while her brother David played them.

So Jim had family tradition to spur him on, and he did very well. There were quite a few dances in our neighborhood even the first winter we were there. They were held in any home, such as Jim Scott's, with a big enough kitchen to dance in, and also in Alberta School, built a few miles west of us. Sometimes all the family except Chaddy and me would go. We would stay home and look after Lavina Wilson whom her parents dropped off at our place on their way to the dance. The music would be supplied by volunteer fiddlers and Jim would listen to the tunes. When he got home he would practise them, and it wasn't long before he could take

his turn to allow the fiddler of the evening a rest or a chance for a dance.

There was a great variety of dances in those days. Quite a large proportion would be square dances or quadrilles with three different parts to each dance. A caller-off would stand up and call the changes. I remember one with the call, "Birdie fly out and hawk fly in, Hawk fly out and give birdie a swing." There was always a lot of swinging and some of the girls would be swung almost off their feet. Old Jack Ellison used to criticize some of the dancers for walking through the different figures instead of stepping. He said if they didn't step, they weren't dancing at all.

These square dances were great fun, but in later years they came to be regarded as too rural and old-fashioned and were dropped from the program. Then years later they came into their own again and have had a tremendous vogue, providing a lot of pleasure both for dancers and onlookers.

In our time there were a great many waltzes, two-steps, three-steps (danced to 'moon-winks'), schottisches, polkas, and a very graceful dance called "The French Minuet." The liveliest dances were the polkas, especially a Scandinavian one which we left chiefly to the Bergers, Gus Hedlund and other Swedes and Norwegians. Their feet flew so lightly and swiftly about the room that few could keep up with them and most of the other dancers stopped to admire.

Chaddy and I had to wait a couple of years before we were allowed to go to these neighborhood dances, but we began quite young at that.

When Jim got out his fiddle at home some nights to practise the tunes, Father and Mother would get up and dance, especially if it was a waltz. Father danced in the old-fashioned way he had learned as a young blade, turning and reversing continuously, so that it was hard for us young ones to suit our style to his.

We had another instrument, the zither. It was shaped like a small harp with treble strings on the right side, on which the air was played by means of a celluloid thumb piece. On the left were several groups of strings arranged in cords, with a heavy, wire-bound string in each group.

The player accompanied the air by strumming with the index finger of the left hand on these chords. The zither was set flat on the table and the player sat in front of it. There was a key to tune the strings. Winnie, who was rather daring, had bought the zither once in Galt complete with a book of instructions. The book contained pieces to be played, with the notes numbered to correspond to the strings. Winnie soon lost interest and gave the zither to Bee. Bee strummed on it a bit and in turn lost interest, so that by the time we came west I fell heir to it.

Like the fiddlers I played chiefly by ear, and soon could play a number of songs and other simple pieces and could even accompany a singer, usually Chaddy, on it. Some ambitious person got up a concert which was held at the Norval Wilson home because they had an "instrument" and their house consisted of one large room big enough for the audience.

I can't remember all the items on the programme, but Chaddy was asked to sing, with me accompanying her on the zither. She sang "Nellie Gray" and I think it must have been rather sweet and unusual. This was the first of a number of concerts in those early years, as the settlers themselves had to provide whatever amusements and recreation they had. Chaddy and I were asked to perform at least once more, because I remember picking out of a magazine the notes of a song called "The Cuckoo-clock," in which I on the zither and she in song were supposed to imitate the sound of the bird in a refrain that went:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! another hour is gone.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! don't waste your time this morn.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! the day is going fast;

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! ere long it will be past."

After this effort, Chaddy was promoted to sing accompanied by "the instrument" at the next concert, and I was discarded. Mrs. Wilson coached her in a pathetic ditty beginning, "Please give me a penny, Sir, My mother dear is dead, And oh, I am so hungry, Sir, A penny please for bread." She was a skinny child at this time anyway, and looked half-starved dressed in a ragged outfit, approaching Norval Wilson with hand outstretched pleadingly as she sang.

After a number of verses of such importuning, he relented and gave her a coin, and joined in singing the last stanza with her.

Chaddy had now blossomed into quite a prima donna, and at the next concert Mrs. Wilson had her trained to sing an even more sorrowful ballad about a little girl whose mother had "gone to a home in the skies," and who wrote a letter to her saying she was so lonely "won't you ask God to send for me?" The little girl went out to post the letter and on the way home was knocked down by a team of runaway horses (this was in pre-Ford days) so her prayer was speedily answered.

After this, Father put his foot down and said he would not allow Chaddy to sing any more songs like this. As a matter of fact, this type of tear-jerker seemed to be very popular at the time. Norval Wilson used to sing solos at every concert and his repertoire was nearly all of this variety. It included "Daddy's on the Engine," a song about a train dashing through a forest fire or a prairie fire, I forget which, but the little girl of the engineer calms the terrified passengers by telling them, "Daddy's on the engine; don't be afraid," etc. Norval had another one about a ship going down while the band played "Nearer my God to thee," and still another about the death of President McKinley.

Norval Wilson was tall and quite nice looking with a dark moustache curled at the corners, so that he had the appearance we associate with the dandies of that period. His legs were especially long in proportion to his height, and when he sang he bent them at the knee and then came up as if he were putting everything he had into his singing.

Another singer, Mrs. Frank Durocher, favored the same kind of ballad, her specialty being "In the Baggage Car Ahead." This was about a young child whose crying annoyed the passengers on a train until they demanded that the child be taken to its mother. Then the poor father sorrowfully explains that her mother is in the baggage car ahead, after which the passengers are all properly ashamed of themselves.

After such a lugubrious fare it was little wonder that

everyone turned with relief to the humourous recitations of Donald Patterson, a young teacher in the neighborhood. His rendering of "O'Grady's Goat" had everyone rocking with laughter, especially when he solemnly described the animal's sad end when, after eating everything imaginable, it finally choked on Mag McGinty's bustle. Sometimes Donald tried to elevate our tastes by declaiming passages from Shakespeare such as Mark Antony's funeral oration over the body of Julius Caesar, but as soon as he finished, the audience clamored for O'Grady's goat.

Another elocutionist in our midst was Arthur Wannop, a member of a large prominent family who lived east of us on the Little Bow. He too tried to keep us on a higher level with such tragic poems as "Bingen on the Rhine," but always had to give in to the demand for "Wee David and Goliath" in which he impersonated an old Scotsman with the bairns gathered around him while he tells the old bible story in Scots dialect. "And wee David was just about that hecht, ye ken," he would say, holding his hand a little distance from the floor, "But man, he was awfu' game!"

The concerts were all too few and far between for us, but we never lacked entertainment in our home. Mother always encouraged us to have plenty of interests of our own so that "we wouldn't have to be tickled from the outside." Besides having Jim's fiddle and my zither, most of us could carry a tune either singing or whistling. Mother had a great stock of old songs, many of them Scottish, and she sang them with a clear lilting voice, not needing to be accompanied by any instrument. Sometimes she and Father would sing a duet, a favorite being, "When ye gang awa,' Jamie." We kids always enjoyed this and waited for the 'surprise' at the end.

Before ending my musical recollections I must not forget to say we had another instrument in our house, the mouth-organ, but this must be left for another chapter.

Chapter Fifteen

CURLY SPENDS THE WINTER WITH US

Once winter had really set in, our neighbor Louis Roy along with some other bachelors in the district, decided to go to the lumber camps of British Columbia (which everyone shortened to "B.C.") to earn some extra money, to help tide over the first lean months on the homestead.

Chaddy and I had told Louis we would look after Curly, his crippled spaniel, while he was away. We took such good care of him that in a short time his appearance changed for the better. We brushed all the mats out of his long ears, and combed the hair on his chest till it hung in silver curls. But he never put on any fat, and his backbone stuck up as much as ever, though he was fed twice a day. Buckles never interfered with him, regarding him with a sort of tolerant superiority, but Curly always watched Buckles with suspicion and jealousy when they were being fed.

One day Curly was gnawing on a bone when Mother set out a pan of buttermilk for the dogs. Curly immediately left his bone and began drinking the milk, growling so threateningly all the while that Buckles left him in possession of it. Then Curly suddenly thought of his bone and hurried back to it for fear Buckles might steal it. Buckles then slipped up and finished the milk, and when Curly found the pan empty, he began to snarl again. Buckles finally lost his patience and gave a few deep warning growls, but as Curly continued to snarl, he seized the spaniel and gave him a few good shakes. Then, planting his front feet on the chest of Curly, who was now on his back with his paws defensively raised, Buckles gazed about him with a far-away, preoccupied expression in his eyes as though quite unaware of the struggling spaniel beneath him, who chewed ineffectually at the strong black and tan legs that pinioned him there. Then when he thought the punishment had lasted long enough, he released the captive, who instantly righted himself and

hobbled off growling threats and defiance as though he had won the battle.

This was the beginning of a sort of feud between the two dogs. One snowy day we hitched Buckles to our little handsled and put Curly into a box on top to act as driver. After a great deal of coaxing we got him to sit up as if he were driving, and we led Buckles around slowly and sedately for fear of upsetting his temperamental passenger. All went well until Bee appeared at the kitchen door with some scraps, and before we could stop him, Buckles was off on the run, upsetting the sleigh with such force that Curly rolled over and over on the snow. He got up fairly gurgling with rage, and no amount of coaxing could persuade him to get into the box again.

We had made a teeter-totter out by the woodpile with a plank laid over a saw-horse. One day Chaddy took Buckles on with her and I took Curly. We teetered for a while this way, though the dogs really didn't like it. Then Chaddy suggested that we get off and leave the dogs on. This we did but we didn't take into account that Buckles weighed twice as much as Curly. When we got off, down came Buckles with a sharp thud, while Curly went flying through space. When we laughed, Buckles' feelings were hurt and he slunk away reproachfully and hid under the granary. Curly blamed it all on him, and hobbled up and down past the granary, growling threats as if daring him to come out.

Jim had brought a bicycle with him from Ontario but it had been neglected in favor of Dixie. One day he got it out and rode it around the yard, just to keep in practice, he said. Buckles and Curly being prairie dogs had never seen a bicycle before and were greatly interested in the performance. Their curiosity would bring them as close as they dared, till Jim steered right at them, and then they would make a hasty retreat. This happened a few times till Chaddy had the mischievous idea of setting them on Jim.

"Heel him up," she shouted.

Their excitement was already at a high pitch, and like good cattle dogs, they flew to obey orders. Jim kept yelling "Lie down!" but in vain. They went after his hind wheel

like two furies, for once working in harmony. Jim tried to keep ahead of them and they went round and round the yard in a circle.

Seeing flight was useless, Jim got off to give the dogs a good kick, but by this time their teeth had punctured the back tire which was not built as heavily in those days as now. This did not make the kick that followed any gentler, and Chaddy and I thought it best to hide behind the stable to have our laugh out till Jim's wrath cooled.

One day we discovered quite accidentally that Curly had a taste (or distaste) for music. This is where our mouth-organ comes in. It was a rather good one and a real player might have brought some harmony from it, but Chaddy and I just played at it. One wintry afternoon Chaddy sat in the kitchen dolefully playing "Old Black Joe" on the mouth-organ. "That's too sad a piece for a dreary day like this," I said. I had made a crude instrument of my own by stretching a piece of tissue paper over a comb, and when Chaddy paid no attention to my remark, I began playing "The Irish Washerwoman" on my comb.

"You make such a racket I can't keep on my tune," Chaddy cried in exasperation.

"You're only on the tune when you're crossing it," I retorted, a smart saying I had picked up somewhere, and I kept right on playing.

Chaddy gave up trying to keep to her tune and concentrated on making enough noise to drown my Irish Washerwoman. Suddenly in the midst of all the discord a new sound was heard. Curly had retreated to the farthest corner of the room, vainly trying to escape the noise, and now sat straight up begging, his head thrown back and his mouth emitting long-drawn-out howls.

We were delighted with this unexpected development from our efforts, and played harder than ever, only stopping every now and then to burst into peels of laughter at a particularly dismal howl.

Jim was in the sitting-room re-reading one of Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales" and for a time probably connected the din with the Indian battle about which he was reading.

As it grew louder and louder, he got up and came out to investigate. It was natural for him to be annoyed at being interrupted in the middle of his thrilling Indian story. Without a word he grabbed the mouth-organ and the comb and threw them out the back door. Away they whizzed, landing far out in the deep snow. We never found the mouth-organ till the snow melted in the spring, and then it was rusted beyond repair.

Meanwhile Curly's nerves had not quite regained their composure, and he gave out a final long, heart-rending howl. Jim had a long-standing grudge at the little dog because he always barked at him when he came in from the stable, as if Jim were a stranger and not a member of the family. Now this howl, and he started toward him. Curly dodged and made for the cellar door. It was open and Jim caught up with him and gave him a good send-off with his boot.

Mother had just been skimming the cream off the milk and had set a pan of skim-milk on the stairs to bring up with her when she came. Poor Curly was not in a position to choose his course and he landed plop in the pan, and the milk and he went the rest of the way together.

It would be hard to say which got the bigger scare Mother or Curly. When the commotion ended and the steps and the dirt floor of the cellar, and Curly had been mopped up, Chaddy and I were told in future to develop Curly's musical talents in the stable.

Chapter Sixteen

VISITING THE NEIGHBORS WAS PLEASANT

One of the pleasantest things we did in the winter-time in those early years was to go visiting. We didn't need an invitation. We could just arrive at a neighbor's without warning to visit and have dinner, just as they were welcome if they arrived unexpectedly at our place. Quite often, however, we were invited. Hugh Hawk would ride over one day on his white pony, Bidby, and say, "Ma wants you all to come over and have dinner at our place on Tuesday."

We would all be delighted to hear this, not only because the Hawks were friendly people, but because, as I have already mentioned, Mrs. Hawk was known in the whole neighborhood as a wonderful cook. Hume Linton used to say when he went there that there were so many good things that he always had a grudge at his stomach because it wouldn't hold more. Earlier I told about her good bread which helped to cure Jim of his indigestion. Everything she made was equally good and she produced a surprising variety with the limited staples available on a homestead. We had been used to the plainer cooking of Mother's Scottish background, and we went all out for the potato salad, cole slaw, pickled eggs, home-made sausage, hot biscuits, jellies, cakes with six layers and chocolate icing between them, nut cakes with caramel icing, pies of many varieties. I think we all had a grudge against our stomachs.

We usually had tea at all our meals, including breakfast, but the Hawks, being American, had coffee more often, and it was coffee to remember. Years later when Bee had married Walt Hawk, he always made the coffee for breakfast. Each morning he ground the beans and then added hot water to them in a tall old-fashioned granite coffee-pot. This was simmered, never boiled, on the back of the range, and when it was ready, a cup with country cream added was taken

up to Bee. It must have been a delicious way to start the day.

Mrs. Hawk was not only a famous cook but a famous housekeeper as well. It was rumoured that "Pa" Hawk (as we spoke of him among ourselves) had to take his boots off halfway from the barn so he wouldn't track in any dirt. Her kitchen and doorsteps were scrubbed spotless. Both her kitchen stove and the heater in the sitting-room shone. Not a speck of dust could be seen on the parlor furniture or carpet. The chairs were all set exactly in place. The enlarged family photographs stared primly at each other from the walls. The pillow-shams or covers and the window curtains in the bedrooms were all crisp and white. There wasn't a wrinkle in the counterpanes on the beds. No one would think of stretching out for a daytime snooze on one of her beds.

One would think we would have felt subdued in this tidy atmosphere, but we didn't. We always had a good time there. Mrs. Hawk, in spite of being a perfectionist, was quite a jolly woman. She would giggle and draw her head down into her shoulders while she enjoyed the joke. She had a habit of repeating almost everything she said (like Browning's wise thrush) and would begin the second time with "I say, . . ." and say it all over. She had a round face with wrinkles and a rather turned-down mouth, and she wore her hair parted in the middle and combed back rather severely into a plain knot at the back. Her print house-dresses and aprons were always starched and immaculate, but as Mother and other homesteaders' wives pointed out, Mrs. Hawk's sphere of action ended at the kitchen door. She never milked a cow, fed a stubborn calf, put a clucking hen on the nest, hoed the garden or carried water. Mr. Hawk and the boys did all the outside chores, and we noticed that most American men did not consider these to be women's work. Farmers from Eastern Canada and from Britain, however, were for the most part less chivalrous and expected their women to rally round and do all sorts of jobs around the place. I remember the wife of Scotty Greig, the harness-maker in Parkland, telling how she had to get up on the

cold winter mornings and light the fire, while Scotty lay in bed till the place warmed up.

"You didn't break him in right, Grace," someone said.

"He'd break my head if I tried," was her reply.

Mr. Hawk had come originally from Hawksville in the same Ontario county as Galt, but he had gone to the States as a young man, married and settled down there, till coming to Alberta to homestead. He was a kindly man with mild, rather watery blue eyes, sandy hair, freckled skin and a rather large, fair moustache. He was not much of a church-goer but he was friendly with all the ministers as they came and went and was a good neighbor to anyone in trouble. He was highly respected in the community and was elected Councillor for many years, and was secretary-treasurer of the school when we got one. He was well-informed and read widely. Father always enjoyed a good talk with him on farm and community affairs. In politics they were on opposite sides but they argued without bitterness.

Mr. Hawk was a great gardener and I remember a cabbage that he sold in town that weighed a prodigious amount and brought a prodigious sum from the store-keeper, for fresh vegetables did not come in from California in those days and early ones were at a premium. We girls especially admired his flower-garden, and he would pick us a bouquet of old-fashioned posies, with hands already twisted with the arthritis that made him bedridden in his last years. His pansy patch was always full of bloom, and the plants would pop up through the snow. I recall an item in a January issue of the Nanton News, saying that Mr. William H. Hawk had brought in a bunch of pansies picked in his garden that week.

All in all we always had a very nice visit at the Hawk home. Mother and Bee would help Mrs. Hawk with the dishes, which was quite an operation, for salt-cellars, sugar-bowl etc. all had to be carefully wiped before being returned to the cupboard, and the washing-up itself took elaborate rinsing, and descending grades of dish-towels for the glass, china and finally the sauce-pans. Father and Mr. Hawk

would settle down for a good talk, while we younger ones played games.

As the short winter day began to fade, Father would say, "Aren't you folks ready to go home?" Then the team that had had a good feed in the stable would be hitched to the go-devil, and we would say our "thank-you's" and "good byes". Then off we would go toward home, over the winding trail through the snow, now bluish-white in the twilight with our sleigh-bells jingling, for Father had brought his string of bells from Ontario. It had been a good day with good neighbors.

Another home where we visited was that of Mr. and Mrs. Gus Hedlund. They were Swedish but had lived quite a while in "The States," I think in Minnesota. Gus was a carpenter and got plenty of work putting up buildings for the homesteaders as they came in. Mrs. Hedlund was another wonderful cook, so here again we enjoyed delicious meals with exceptionally good coffee and pastries. Even her rice pudding was different, as it was served cold in a sort of Bavarian cream mold. She also made waffles on an old-fashioned waffle-iron, not the modern electric variety. We had never seen waffles before. I remember a cake made with many eggs and called "sunshine cake", and a white cake split and filled with whipped cream. We had cream at home, but it had to be saved for butter.

Mrs. Hedlund was a pleasant woman and a very satisfactory audience, for if one was telling her something, she would throw up her hands and exclaim, "Well, forever more!" When the Hedlunds had a meal at our place, Mr. Hedlund would stand up when it was finished, click his heels together, bow from the waist and formally thank mother for the dinner.

The grown-ups of our two families did not visit as often as Chaddy and I and the two Hedlund boys, Lawrence, a little older than I was and Alvin, about Chaddy's age and nick-named "Babe." There were so few children in the neighborhood that we four made a path back and forth over the two miles to each other's homes. As Mrs. Hedlund had no girls, she had dressed dolls for Alvin and he enjoyed

playing with them. She also taught him to do the beautiful Hardanger embroidery work that she did so well. We played games together and Mrs. Hedlund would make us cocoa, something we rarely had at home.

We visited occasionally too at the Eversfield home after Mrs. Eversfield and May came out from England. Captain Eversfield was an Englishman who had been master on vessels trading along the West Coast of Africa. We do not know how he found his way to the Alberta prairie, but he said he had ploughed the sea for many years and now he was going to plough the land. He was short and stout and rather belligerent looking. He had stayed with our men before we came out while he was getting a house up on his place. His son Alf came out and helped him get established.

Alf played the violin and was a great asset at our concerts, though most of the audience preferred the old-fashioned fiddle to his classical numbers. While the Captain was at our place, Father said he would be up early every morning surveying distances and weather prospects with instruments unknown to the tillers of the soil. Alf lent Jim a lot of English school stories and back issues of the "Boys' Own Paper," and Chaddy and I enjoyed these too.

Alf got tired of being flunkey to his father who was used to having a whole crew under him. Besides, the Captain would drive into town in the wagon and come home literally "roaring" drunk, for people could hear him coming in the distance. The horses would bring him safely home and stop at the gate and Alf would go out and put them into the stable. The Captain liked his roast beef as well as other good things, and what with the cost of living and the cost of putting up buildings, the extra quarter-section that he had purchased, had to be sold, "else we wouldn't have roast beef every day," explained Alf.

So finally Alf went off to Calgary and had no trouble getting himself a good job. About this time Mrs. Eversfield and her younger daughter May arrived. The elder daughter, Belle, was a mistress in a girls' school in Liverpool and refused to come out. She did not want to give up her position, and she did not get on with her father. However, she

wrote long letters to her mother and May every week and kept them supplied with books and magazines.

May was a little younger than Chaddy, but she was an endless source of interest and admiration for both of us. She was a product of an English school for girls, the sort we had read about in boarding-school stories such as those in the "Girls' Own Paper," and she fed the flame by lending us many more of these publications. She played the piano and she was trained in elocution, giving renditions of such pieces as "Little Orphan Annie," "The Spotted Giraffe," "The Two Dolls," and "The White Rabbit," with great expression and appropriate gestures. Her English accent increased her glamour for us. She was indeed a great addition to our concerts.

Mrs. Eversfield was a quiet, cultured woman and probably had no illusions as to the life she was coming to, but she adapted herself bravely to the hardships, and was friendly with all the neighbors and well-liked by them, however different their backgrounds might be.

Our first visit to the Eversfield home took us into an entirely new atmosphere. They had all sorts of exotic things that the Captain had brought home from his voyages to distant places—elephant tusks carved with strange figures, yards of fine Madeira embroidery, bolts of silk, and over the doorway a hideous sort of idol which the Captain called "Jou-Jou" and which he claimed would keep evil spirits away.

I think the visit must have been near Christmas, for I remember we had a rich plum-pudding that Belle has sent out from England. We smacked our lips at the thought of it, but the first taste made us look at each other with surprise and disappointment. When we toyed with it and didn't eat, Mrs. Eversfield laughed and asked us if we didn't like the sauce, and then we found that it was heavily laced with brandy. The Captain said that was the best part of the pudding and they must have thought us very naive when we did not appreciate good brandy sauce.

The Captain told us that on board ship if there were passengers, he was supposed to say grace, but he got around it by pounding on the table for silence, lowering his head

and then saying "Amen!" He had other more hair-raising stories.

Mrs. Eversfield was very generous with the books and magazines her daughter sent her, and lent and gave them away freely to the neighbors. We still have some of her gifts among our books, pleasant English novels of that period.

From lack of experience and for other reasons, their homesteading venture did not prove a success, and its end was tragic. May died while still in her 'teens from lack of proper medical attention as well as the hardships in her life, and the Captain was found dead one day following an apopleptic stroke. The place was sold and Mrs. Everfield went to live with Alf and his wife in Calgary.

When we went to visit at the Linton home, we were among people of our own kind. Our parents had grown up on farms near Galt with a similar Scottish Presbyterian background. We had many laughs when we went there, for Hume, Mame, Warwick and Douglas were all very witty and amusing. They had a rooster which had one leg cut off by a mower. Warwick whittled it a wooden leg which he attached in some way, and it hopped around on this. They called it "C.D.", short for "Christmas Dinner."

Mrs. Linton was a very serious woman with no sense of humour at all, and she was often at a loss to see through the jokes and witticisms of her children. Peter Patterson Jr. who later married Mame Linton, used to say in fun that he could never understand how such a sensible woman as Mrs. Linton, could have had such crazy children. There was an elderly French-Canadian named Lefaive batching in a shack on his homestead not far from the Lintons. One day Mrs. Linton made a batch of her famous Scotch scones for supper, and she thought it would be a neighborly act to send some of them over to old Mr. Lefaive, as a change from his bachelor fare. Douglas took them over, golden and light and hot off the griddle. Mr. Lefaive, however, took a different meaning from the kindly gift and told all over the country-side, "The widow she think she catch me, but she no catch me." The Linton boys had great fun kidding their mother about trying to catch the old Frenchman, but the

thought of the untidy, none too clean old fellow thinking she had designs on him didn't amuse Mrs. Linton at all. Needless to say, he got no more hot scones for his supper.

If they did not inherit their humour from their mother, they certainly got their artistic gift from her. Their walls were decorated with interesting drawings, paintings and petit-point pictures done by members of the family. Mrs. Linton was very skilled with her needle, and when her husband Ebenezer or Eben, as she preferred to call him, died in his prime and left her four children to support, she started a sewing class for young ladies, teaching them the many beautiful embroidery stitches which she did so expertly herself. Her eldest son, Hume, though very clever, had to give up his hopes for a university education and at the age of 17 went out to British Columbia to prospect for gold and make a fortune for his family. Things did not work out that way, so now he had joined forces with his mother on the homestead. It was a relief for her to have a man share some of her responsibilities.

Besides being artistic, the Lintons were musical and owned an "instrument," which Warwick especially played very well. It was not an upright nor a grand piano, but a large flat-topped variety known, I think, as a "square piano." Other furniture which made their parlor grander than most, was a walnut set consisting of a graceful sofa upholstered in gold brocade, two chairs to match with fruit carving on the back, and a marble-top table. Warwick admired these very much and his mother promised them to him when she was through with them, but he died before she did from after effects of World War I, when he and Chaddy had been married just three years. The furniture was eventually passed on to his and Chaddy's daughter, Charlotte, something none of us would ever have foreseen in those carefree homestead days.

I feel I can't end this account of our neighborly visits without mentioning those we made to the Norval Wilson home. I have referred to her being an indifferent bread-maker and hinted that she took some of her household duties rather lightly, but she always made us feel welcome and

we were free to do anything we wanted to do. For example, they had built a granary near the house with the intention of finishing it later into an extra room. In the meantime Mrs. Wilson had stacked piles of old magazines there to get them out of the way. This was good pickings for Chaddy and me, and I remember one hot day we holed up in this stuffy place all one afternoon and had a gorge of reading. Some big bluebottles boomed around overhead, which would make us shudder now, but we thought of them as merely a rowdy accompaniment to the long lazy afternoon. Mrs. Wilson did not think us impolite at all, so long as we were happy.

She often left Lavina with us when they passed our place on their way to Nanton, or on some other jaunt, and we enjoyed having her, for she was a pleasant little girl with curly hair and big grey eyes. The term "baby-sitter" was unknown then, and we would not have dreamed of being paid for looking after Lavina, but I still have two presents Mrs. Wilson brought me, a napkin ring with "Souvenir of Nanton" engraved on it, and a copy of Dickens' "Christmas Books" beginning with his "Christmas Carol" which I have re-read many a time over the years. On the fly-leaf in my mother's beautiful hand-writing is the inscription "Georgie Thomson, from Mrs. N. B. Wilson, Christmas 1905."

Chapter Seventeen

I RUN AWAY FROM HOME

Like many adolescents, I often used to feel sorry for myself, and think that my family and others lacked sympathy and understanding. As I have previously mentioned, I grew quite fat after we came out west, and was a regular little Miss Five-by-Five. People who came to visit us would say to Mother right in front of me, "Georgie's getting quite fat!" Only some would say "fleshy" which seemed worse, though they were trying to be polite. One man rudely remarked, "Isn't she a whale!" It was probably my age and too much starch in my diet, but I became so self-conscious about it, that if certain people came to the house, I would stay upstairs and go without my meals, rather than face their remarks.

I decided I must do something about it, and began going off on long walks by myself over the bleak snow-covered prairie. When I returned, my family, especially Jim, would tease me and ask how many pounds I had lost.

Then I was never one of those people who enjoy getting up in the morning. In our family Ethel, Jim and Chaddy were all good risers and would be up and about early with no apparent effort, but Winnie and Bee and I were sleepy heads. The front half of our upstairs was one big bedroom with two beds for us girls, and I remember Bee dragging herself up in the morning and consoling herself by saying to us, "I'm going to have a good sleep this afternoon." I think it was the high altitude and change of climate that made us feel so sleepy. I would snuggle down after Chaddy got up, and only get dressed at the last possible moment, so that I was very often late for breakfast.

This was at the time when President Teddy Roosevelt was expounding the gospel of "the strenuous life," and one of the magazines we took, published an article by him in which he criticized the way people wasted time by dawdling.

They would sit and look at their shoes in the morning, he said, wasting precious moments while they tried to make up their minds whether to put the left shoe or the right shoe on first.

If I was late coming to breakfast, Jim would come to the foot of the stairs and call up, "What did Teddy Roosevelt say?"

Bee was inclined to be rather sarcastic too. I wrote a story about this time and said I was going to send it to the Nanton News to be published. I had dreams of improving the family fortunes, but when Bee read the story, she remarked cuttingly, "They would charge you quite a bit to publish that." I was completely crushed. Sometimes when I was especially angry at something she said, I would try to think of a way to get even with her. She had a beautiful workbox with the picture of a beautiful lady on the enamel lid. I would rush upstairs in a rage, take the box off her dresser and hide it underneath it or under the bed. It was so precious I would not dream of destroying it, even in my anger. In a few minutes Bee would come up, stoop down and pick up the box and put it back on the dresser, give me a superior smile and go back downstairs. I must have been very stupid to do this over and over, and not even think of a new hiding-place, but it relieved my feelings and so probably fulfilled a useful function without doing any harm.

When I was this age, twelve, Father was the one who filled me with the most resentment. He used to boast that he had never whipped any of his children, but a whole article might be written on his ideas of discipline.

Chaddy and I slept together, that is, in the same bed, but Chaddy kept strictly to her own side and expected me to do the same. She lay perfectly straight on her back, and I wasn't supposed to touch her. I, however, liked to "cuddle in," especially on the cold winter nights when the wind howled around our thinly-built house, and the only heat reaching the upstairs was the stovepipe running from the stove below up to the chimney. Even if we took a hot iron or a brick to bed, it would be cold by morning.

One night while asleep I had crept up close to Chaddy

and was wakened by her saying, "You're over on my side of the bed." "I am not," I replied. "You are so. Your whole rear is over." "It is not," I insisted, and so we went on arguing.

As I have explained, the only partitions upstairs were carpets hung to divide the rooms, and Father, always a light sleeper, was soon wakened by our angry voices.

"If you can't keep quiet at this hour of the night," he called, "Get up and go downstairs and let other people sleep."

We wouldn't dare to object and there was nothing to do but to crawl out into the cold room and go downstairs in our nightgowns in the dark, for we wouldn't think of feeling for matches and lighting the coal-oil lamp. I had the foresight to grab a comforter off the bed and take it with me, and once down in the kitchen I pulled a couple of chairs up to the stove and huddled down on them under the quilt. I was angry with Father and even more angry with Chaddy.

"Why did you have to make such a fuss over nothing?" I whispered hoarsely.

"You were over on my side of the bed and you know you were," she whispered back angrily.

There was no use arguing further, so I shut my eyes and pretended I was asleep, and pretty soon I was. Then I heard Father calling, "You can come back up to bed now if you know how to behave."

Chaddy scuttled back up immediately but I was in a sulky mood. "I'm quite comfortable where I am," I replied daringly.

"You get back up here when I tell you," ordered Father, and I judged by the tone of his voice I had better do so, but I lay at the very edge of the bed away from Chaddy to let her feel my disapproval.

One of our favorite amusements all through our childhood was a large blackboard which hung on the kitchen wall. Mother had had it made for the older children, and all six of us played on it, while their children and grandchildren have enjoyed it in their turn.

Many a happy hour Chaddy and I had playing "tick-tack-tow," "Pussy" (as we called "noughts and crosses")

and other games, or we played school and took turns being teacher. We spent a great deal of time drawing pictures, styles of girls' dresses we had liked in the magazines, little scenes, and sometimes we did portraits of each other, usually uncomplimentary. At that time Jim and I had what were commonly called "pug" noses. With the years they have grown long and pointed, but then we were told that when we smiled our noses spread all over our faces. Chaddy delighted to draw an unflattering profile of me with an exaggerated pug nose liberally sprinkled with freckles. One day I held her down and tickled her till she promised not to draw me with a nose again. After that when she did a profile of me she would put a straight vertical line where the nose should be, which looked very peculiar, but I couldn't object because she had kept literally to her promise.

One grey wintry day Chaddy and I were having a good time at the blackboard when Jim came along and began to tease us. I don't remember what he did or said, but he was a born tease and had a way of "riling" us without making any disturbance himself. Father never could stand having us make a noise when he was in the house. It didn't bother Mother. She probably had her nose in a book or was busy with some household problem and didn't hear us.

This day as Jim prodded us, he got a good reaction and Chaddy and I were both yelling at him telling him to leave us alone. Without looking into the cause of the uproar, Father looked up from his paper and shouted at Chaddy and me to "stop that racket or go upstairs." Suddenly I was furious and I shouted back at him, "You're always scolding *us* but you never say a word to Jim. He can do anything he likes."

Father got up and came toward us and on a sudden impulse of anger I threw the chalk in his face and then ran to the door shouting, "I'm sick of all this. I'm going to leave home." Then I rushed out into the cold, without a coat or wraps of any kind, and went tearing off toward the stable.

I was tempted to stop there for the warmth and comfort of the animals, but I had said I was running away so I had to keep going. I went around behind the stable, through the

gate to the trail leading up over the ridge toward the spring, but the trouble was there was no place to go. I felt too hostile to go to a neighbor's, and anyway they were a long way off over the windswept prairie.

A piece of farm machinery had been pulled up and left in the field, as Father did not yet have a machine shed. I went over and crawled under it. Its meagre shelter provided about the only protection as well as concealment that there was in sight. I crouched there shivering and after a while the heat of my anger turned to self-pity. Father didn't love me at all. The others in the family all had something special. Winnie was the eldest and quite pretty. Ethel was the cleverest, Bee was the best cook. Jim was the only boy and the pride of his heart. Chaddy was the youngest and his pet. She would even sit on his knee and curl his moustache. But I had no place in his heart at all.

Soon Chaddy came by looking for me and calling my name, but although she was a fellow victim and had done nothing to me, I still felt too bitter to come out and go back to the house with her. She went on up the trail and disappeared over the ridge calling "Georgie! Georgie!" I felt miserable and mean about letting her go, but I could not bring myself to answer her.

After a while Father came along the trail calling "Georgina!" the name he used for me in his sterner moods. I was very cold and miserable and I realized that there was no future in my flight. If I didn't want to freeze to death out there in the snow, I would have to go in and face Father sooner or later. So I crawled out and went over to him, expecting the worst. To my surprise he put his arms around me, kissed my tear-stained face and told me he was sorry. I said I was sorry too and we went back together to the house. Mother got me up to the stove with my feet in the oven. I think she must have sent Father after me but she said nothing about my escapade, and nobody else did. The lamp was lit and soon we were all sitting around the supper table. How wonderful it was to be warm and cozy there with my family, and especially wonderful to know that Father did love me after all.

Chapter Eighteen

OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS ON THE HOMESTEAD

Our first Christmas on the homestead would seem very poor and drab to most children and grown-up people too, today. There were no brightly decorated stores with expensive toys and a commercial Santa Claus in each; no throngs of Christmas shoppers anxiously scanning lists; no Christmas church services with special music and chiming bells; no radios playing Christmas carols all day long. The bare unpainted wooden houses were a far cry from the dazzling lights and elaborate Christmas symbols outside city homes today, competing with one another for the community prize. A coal-oil lamp in the window to twinkle far across the snowy prairie to other homesteaders was about the extent of our illumination, and nobody we knew of had even a Christmas tree. It would have meant a long trip by team back through the snow-filled valleys and slopes of the foothills. The first Christmas tree I remember in our community was after the school opened in our district in 1906.

Actually if we had still been living back in Galt we would not likely have had a Christmas tree in our home. Our parents were of Scottish Presbyterian descent and while they did not go as far as their forbears, who believed Christmas festivities savoured of "Popery," they had been brought up to consider New Year's day the proper time to celebrate. As children we were always taken on New Year's Day to our grandfather's home to have dinner with all the uncles, aunts and cousins near enough to attend.

The day before New Year's was Hogmanay Day and Father used to tell us how as a young lad he and a cousin would go around to relatives' and neighbors' homes shouting:

"Get up guid wife and shake your feathers.

Ye need na think that we are beggars.

We're just wee bairns come oot to play.

Get up and gui's our Hogmanay."

Everyone was supposed to have a great store of cakes, such as oatmeal cookies and shortbread on hand for such callers, and the day was often called "Cake Day." Father said that when he and his cousin called on their Aunt Jen, she would even give them some weak toddy. They thought they were gay young blades, and their Aunt Jen, a very jolly woman, would chuckle with them.

The more seriously inclined went to a Watch Night service in the church.

Early next morning our grandfather would be up "first footing"—taking a basket with something to eat and something to drink to his nearest neighbor so that they would have plenty throughout the year. It was lucky to have a dark man for your "first foot" but very unlucky to have a red-haired woman.

Compared with New Year's, Christmas among our folk down east was quite quiet. The adults never thought of rushing around before Christmas trying to buy presents for friends and relatives. We children always hung up our stockings and Mother did her best to put something nice in them, and we had a special Christmas dinner, just our own family, usually with a goose, while we lived in Galt. But Mother would have thought our mad Christmas rat-race today a waste of time, money and energy.

For our first Christmas on the homestead, the simple treats and gifts we could afford had to be bought in Nanton. Usually when Father went to town, Mother made out a list of the things she needed and left the shopping for Father. She didn't enjoy the jolting ten-mile trip by wagon, and Father was a good shopper, except that he was a little more reckless than Mother and would usually buy a few tempting items not on the list. On the last trip in before Christmas, however, Mother decided to go along and see what she could find to fill our stockings. Chaddy and I went too. We had a wee bit of spending money and had decided to blow it in on a coal scuttle for Mother. A battered old pail had been doing duty for this, and it was not only an eyesore but it didn't hold much, and Mother was always having to ask someone to go out and fill it, or more often, because she was

an impatient person, she would rush out into the cold and fill it herself.

We burnt "Galt" coal, and this had seemed strange to us at first, coming from Galt, Ontario, as we did. We soon found out that the coal was called "Galt" because it came from the Galt mines at Lethbridge. These had been developed by the Galts, the son and grandson of John Galt after whom our native city had been named. The Galt family had done much for Alberta as well as for the rest of Canada. But we weren't thinking about this as we slipped away to buy the new coal scuttle and hide it in the wagon while Mother was buying groceries.

Mother had some twinges of homesickness while she made her purchases, comparing the little wooden shops with their false fronts in this bare prairie village, with the solid stone stores of Galt well-stocked with a variety of goods. But she didn't spoil our day with complaints. She always said she could make her home and be happy any place so long as she had her family around her.

Soon we were all in the wagon bumping along home, tired but happy after our day in town and the feeling of Christmas in the air. Now and then when we went over an especially rough patch of badger holes, a strange rattling sound came from under our wagon seat, and Chaddy had to put her foot into the coal scuttle to keep it from rattling too much and giving the secret away to Mother.

We knew that among the mail we had picked up at the post office there was a big box from our sisters Winnie and Ethel, and a letter from them with instructions not to open it till Christmas Eve when Mother was to put the gifts into our stockings. Chaddy had hopes that the box might contain a pair of red kid gloves for her, something she had longed for ardently and audibly for many months, though when and where she would wear them, she did not say. She had always had hands that chapped or roughened easily, and then the dirt would get into the cracks. If she used a nail-brush on them, they would bleed. The year before we came west, Ethel had helped her to take care of them, though usually tallow was the only ointment avail-

able for them then, as compared with the lovely smelling lotions we have today. She promised her a ring for that Christmas if she kept her hands soft and clean, and had kept the promise, though she had given Chaddy some bad moments by doing the ring box up inside a large container while Chaddy looked with sinking heart for the tiny ring box. This year Chaddy had been reporting to Ethel regularly on the soft condition of her hands, and had made it plain that ox-blood red was the color she most admired in kid gloves.

The thought of the box made Mother happy too, not only because she knew it would augment her own meagre purchases in filling the stockings for the younger ones, but it brought the presence of her two biggest girls closer to her across the miles.

In the short time remaining before Christmas, Mother and Bee set to work to make a plum pudding, a Christmas cake, mince pies made from the dried mince-meat squares already mentioned, ginger cookies and oatmeal cookies, shortbread and currant loaf. Eggs were in short supply because our five hens hadn't much encouragement to lay in their chilly house, one board thick. But recipes were adapted and substitutions made, and everything smelled very good to us. The raisins we bought then were large unseeded ones, and Chaddy and I were set to work stoning them. It wasn't just because we were young then that they tasted so much better than raisins do now.

Making the shortbread was a great trial for Mother, but of course no one with Scottish blood would dream of not having it. She made it from the traditional recipe in the proportion of four pounds of flour to one pound of butter or shortening and half-a-pound of sugar. To work in that amount of flour without adding any moisture was really hard to do, and many were the "Drat it all's" and similar exclamations from Mother when she would think she had it together and it would crack and disintegrate. It tasted wonderful to us, but Mother always said it wasn't in it with what her mother used to make.

Father didn't care for shortbread but he liked the cur-

rant loaf. Mother made it by taking some of the dough from her regular batch and kneading lard, sugar, spice, fruit and candied peel into it. I didn't blame Father for liking it. The whole business of bread-making was a steady one for Mother. We ate so much that she had to bake often, and it was hard work to mix and knead such big batches. She made her yeast by boiling dried hops and adding them to dried yeast-cakes by some formula I have forgotten, though I recall the strange pungent smell of the hops boiling.

After the dough was mixed and kneaded, her big worry in the wintertime was to keep it warm overnight, so that it would rise and not chill. The pan would be covered with towels and then swathed in heavy quilts and a big overcoat on top of all. The dampers of the stove would be turned in such a way as to keep the fire low but steady all night. It was surprising how few failures Mother had. I can't really remember any, but only the wonderful smell when she took the loaves out of the oven, and how good they tasted with home-made butter.

Mother never cared much for cooking. She used to say you worked so hard cooking and baking and then everything was gobbled up in a little while and you had nothing to show for all your efforts. She never could be bothered making fancy dishes and if she had lived to see the elaborate concoctions pictured in color photographs in the magazines today, she would have thought them a silly waste of time. She had things more useful and more interesting to do.

At bedtime on Christmas Eve, Father and Mother stayed downstairs to fill all our stockings. At the same time we four were upstairs filling theirs with the gifts from Winnie's and Ethel's parcel which we made them hand over to us, and our own purchases which were not much. Next Christmas Jim got a job as a clerk in Hammill and McLaren's store in Nanton, and spent most of what he earned on presents for all of us. But this year money was a scarce article for all of us and most of our gifts were home-made, but we got a lot of fun out of our preparations. Jim kept singing in a silly way part of a children's Christmas song "Santa Claus will come tonight, Come tonight, if you're

good." We all laughed when he came to the lines, "Down the chimney he will creep, Bringing you a woolly sheep," because the only chimney we had was a piece of stove-pipe sticking through the roof.

We couldn't disguise the coal scuttle so we put Father's and Mother's stockings in it.

Next morning we were up in the chilly dawn feeling for our knobby stockings in the dark. We took the coal scuttle in and dumped it on top of Mother's and Father's bed, and I don't suppose they appreciated such a rude awakening. Bee lighted a lamp in each room and we climbed into bed to keep warm while we looked at our gifts. They would seem very ordinary to children now. To begin with they were not wrapped in beautiful gay Christmas paper and tied with bright ribbons the way things are done today. Ours were tied up in plain store paper and string, but they seemed very exciting and wonderful to us. We could hear the rattle of the nuts and hard candies, and smell the orange which always filled one toe. It would probably be the only orange we would have all winter. Today vitamin-conscious mothers say to their children, "Now drink up your orange juice," and the children drink it in a bored and listless way. To us an orange was a rare treat, an exotic thing from far-away lands, and the big question was to decide how we should eat it: should we bite a hole and suck the juice, or peel it and eat it, delicious segment by segment?

Chaddy got her ox-blood kid gloves and so was in a blissful state. My gift from Ethel and Winnie was a ring set with a piece of coral surrounded by tiny seed pearls. It was my first ring and I was as proud of it as Chaddy was of her gloves.

After we had opened our parcels, we lay and sucked hard candies and admired our treasures. From Jim's cubicle came a doleful song:

"Santa Claus *won't* come tonight . . ."

Father made us all laugh by coming to breakfast in Chaddy's gift, a night-cap made from some woollen underwear with a tassel dangling from the top. Father's hair was

getting pretty thin and he said the cap would keep his head warm in the chilly winter nights.

There had been snow in the night and it clung to the barbed-wire fences, making them look like popcorn strings on a Christmas tree.

We had no poultry for our dinner as our chickens were so few to be sacrificed, but Father had bought a roast of beef in Nanton, a rare treat for us, and we had all the things Mother and Bee had been making.

After the dishes were done and we felt lazy and stuffed, we sat around the table and played a new game Winnie had sent us called "Spot-it." Each player had a map of England on which each place marked had a number attached. Mother called out the name of a place and we all looked for it. Whoever found it first called out "Spot-it!" and gave the number attached as proof. Then he or she was given a point on a clock-like score-card with a clock for each person. It was instructive but it was also quite exciting, as two or three would sometimes call "spot-it" at the same time.

There were also new books to read, so we all had a thoroughly happy day. The animals, too, were remembered. All of them from Buckles and the kitten to Annie Rooney and the other cows, Buck and Queenie and Dixie, and even the pigs and chickens had something extra for a treat that first Christmas day on the homestead.

Following Christmas there was a round of parties among the young folks and sometimes Chaddy and I were allowed to go with Bee and Jim. At some of them they played cards, but more often there were old-fashioned games like "spin-the-plate," "earth, air and water," "The minister's cat," and "Empty the fruit basket." At one party at the Lintons', contests were introduced. In one we were each given the title of a book and asked to draw a picture representing it. I had "the Pickwick Papers" and Mame Linton suggested to me that I draw a pick and a lamp wick turned up. Mame had to go around and give helpful hints to most of the struggling contestants and add a few pencil strokes. Most of the guests seemed to think such a contest was "too high-

brow" and returned happily to "spin-the-plate" which didn't require any mental effort.

The refreshments were a big part of the evening. I remember once Mother served along with other things some buttered Scotch scones baked on a griddle or "girdle" as Scottish people called it, and one family went home and said the Thomsons served cold pan-cakes.

Chapter Nineteen

OUR FIRST SPRINGTIME ON THE HOMESTEAD

We were so green that we did not realize that the winter of 1904-5 was an unusually mild one. Father and Jim were working on the land through part of January and February, and on March 3rd, Jim's birthday, Mother put in her garden. People who had been in the country a winter or so before us were horrified, but Mother said the soil, part of the fire-guard, had been worked up well in the fall, and was clear of snow and frost, thanks to some very warm chinooks, so she went ahead and planted not only potatoes and carrots but things like corn and citrons that had never been grown in the district before. Strangely enough they were spared from frost, flourished and matured, but we knew later it was beginner's luck. Such a thing never happened again.

Mother had named our place "Parkhouse" after a farm in Ontario where we had lived, and she was determined to change its bleak appearance and make it live up to its name. Early in the year she had written away to the government Experimental Farm at Indian Head in what was then the District of Assiniboia, for tree seeds. A missionary in the West had said that the prairie was as prayerless as it was treeless. Mother agreed at least about its "treelessness," and she missed the oaks and maples and other beautiful trees of Ontario so much that she wanted to get started right away to grow something that would take their place. At Indian Head they were most co-operative but advised her to stick to varieties that had been proved hardy enough for the climate. They sent a little sack of caragana seed or Siberian peas, and one of Manitoba maple seeds, or box elders, as the Americans called them.

Mother started the caraganas in a row between the grass and the edge of the ploughed land to the south of the house, and the maples in two or three long rows on the fire-

guard north of the house. They all grew and the caraganas made a fine hedge which became immensely tall through the years. It was a pity she hadn't planted some to the west of the house to break the strong west winds that swept across the prairies. At first Mother tried to keep the maples with trunks like trees, but in certain winters they would freeze back, and then come up like a shrub from the roots. Still, they were green and a break in the prevailing flatness.

We were told that west of us in the foothills there were plenty of trees, willows, poplars and spruce, suitable for fence-posts, and as most of the homesteaders, like ourselves, had a few acres of crop seeded by now, they needed a fence to keep the prairie cattle off it. So one spring morning in 1905 a number set off for the hills with their teams and wagons. Along with Father and Jim, as I recall, were Billy Ellison, Louis Roy, Hume Linton and Captain Eversfield.

The trip of about 25 miles took quite a while by wagon as the hills were steep. It was well on in the afternoon when they reached a good stand of trees and everyone went to work chopping them down and trimming them into fence-posts. They had them ready to load by bedtime so they could make an early start the next day.

Afterwards Jim gave us a graphic account of the night they spent. They camped beside Willow Creek on the McDermid ranch which had been the old Mott ranch and was later to be owned by the Gregory Brothers and then John Cross. There was an old milk-house of logs, with a spring of icy cold water, delicious to drink after the warmish alkali water of the plains.

When it grew dark the men unrolled their bedding and lay down under the wagons, but Captain Eversfield scoffed at this idea, and carried his blankets out into the open.

"Why boys, I've slept on old bottles for a mattress and a cellar door for a blanket," he said.

The horses were tied to the backs of the wagons and the men could hear them munching their hay and oats.

In the middle of the night they were awakened by a fiendish howl, long-drawn-out and horrible, sounding almost beside them, though it probably came from a bob-cat or lynx

somewhere up the creek. The men all sat up and listened. The air was perfectly still and sultry, while now and then streaks of lightning flashed through the sky. Suddenly the bulky form of the captain loomed up, looking more bulky than ever before because he had thrown his blankets over his shoulders.

"Boys," he panted, "I've been in Africa and the South Sea Islands and India, and I never heard such a blood-curdling hair-raising yell as that," and he rolled in with the others.

They lay talking about what animal made the howl, and before they could get to sleep again a heavy rain began to fall. For a while they kept moderately dry under the wagons. Then some of the horses got frightened and backed up, pulling the wagons with them.

The grass was dripping wet and it was too dark to do much about shelter, so the men climbed into their wagons and huddled down under their blankets.

"A rough night under canvas," one yelled out.

"Blamed leaky canvas," said another.

"It reminds me of the hurricane deck," roared the captain.

When day dawned it was a very dismal wet morning. The men hastily loaded up their poles and started for home without breakfast. Anyway everything was too soaked to eat.

The rains had made the trails very slippery and as the wagons hadn't any breaks it was hard for the horses to hold their loads back going down hills. So the men locked the wheels with chains, and apparently overdid the braking a bit, for Hume Linton's team of greys, Jen and Pete, balked coming down the steepest hill. Jim said it was a funny sight to see horses balking on the downgrade with a heavy load.

About noon they came to a ranch-house where they were offered a meal. The rancher's wife wore an oil-skin hat as the roof was leaking. She had a slight hump on her back which kept the brim of the hat out and shed the rain in quite an efficient way. Jim was fascinated by this.

After dinner the rain stopped and the men dug a few

young spruce to plant around the homestead buildings, and Jim picked some tiger lilies for us.

As they stood at the top of the last high hill they looked down at the prairie spread out below, with its few tiny patches of green here and there where grain had been seeded. When they reached these patches they found them brightened and refreshed by the rain which had given them such an uncomfortable night.

We at home had had our adventures too while they were away. Father had borrowed Louis Roy's quiet old horse "Pig" for us to ride after the cows. We were entrusted with all the chores and we felt quite important. Chaddy and I decided that Pig ought to be watered several times a day, as this meant pleasant rides for us to the spring. His back was so broad that our feet stuck out almost at right angles on both sides, and we must have looked very funny in our big check sunbonnets, not at all like the romantic cow girls we liked to think of ourselves as being.

We spent a lot of time brushing and currying Pig, braiding his mane and sticking wild-flowers in it till he looked quite gay and frivolous.

One day we found a nest of eggs hidden in the haystack where old Jennie had laid away, and Chaddy and I carried them into the house in our aprons. Unfortunately one of them slipped out and broke on the kitchen floor and immediately there was a most horrible smell and we all held our noses.

"Where did you get those eggs?" Mother demanded. When we told her she said, "March right out of this house and throw them down some badger hole out on the prairie." This we did, glad to get away from the smell and Mother's and Bee's hard words.

In the afternoon Mother decided to take advantage of the men's absence to paint the kitchen floor. We were so busy watching her that we did not see old Roany open the gate into the house-yard and come through, followed by the other cows. Buckles was the first to notice them and by that time they had upset the water barrel. Father had left what he thought was enough to do us till he got back, but

now we were left without any. Mother decided we had better hitch old Pig in some way to the stone-boat and haul some water from the spring. The men had taken most of the harness and there were no lines, but we got Pig hitched up with some makeshift traces and then Chaddy and I led him.

We didn't want to overload Pig and so filled the barrel only half full. Every few yards we would stop and give him a rest and soon the cunning old fellow stopped of his own accord. It was supper time before we arrived with the water, and Mother was waiting impatiently to fill the tea-kettle.

After the men got home with their fence posts, fence making became general in the neighborhood. Holes were dug for the bigger spruce posts at intervals and at the corners, but the willow and poplar posts were pounded in by a heavy maul from the wagon. The barbed wire came in spools which were unwound from the back of the wagon as the team was driven along. The wire was nailed to the posts by staples.

And so the old trails were cut off and great was the indignation of the cowboys and ranchers when this happened, and understandably too. The homesteaders, however, were obliged to fence so many acres before they could "prove up" or be given the patent to their land. Moreover they had to have fences to protect their crops on the land they had broken and tilled with such toil. Father fenced not only around the whole quarter-section, but also enclosed 40 acres to the north where the spring was, which he wanted to keep as a pasture field. He did not want to waste land or fencing on a lane to reach this, so we always just used the road allowance to take the cattle to the pasture. He left a lane, however, from the barnyard out to the road, running between the house-yard and the north field. At the entrance to the barnyard a gate was installed of the typical western variety, made with three or four strands of barbed wire with stakes attached to hold the gate erect. The wires were fastened to the post at the left-hand side of the gateway while at the other post there was a loop of wire near the bottom into

which the lower part of the end stake was thrust when you were shutting the gate, while a loop at the top of the post came down over the top of the stake, thus holding it firmly in place. When you wanted to open the gate, you pressed the top of this end stake in toward the post, and slipped the wire loop off it, reversing the whole process. You always had to pull the gate back out of the way when stock was going through so they would not get their legs entangled in the barbed wire.

It was a very annoying kind of gate to open or shut, especially if you were a girl and were short and had short arms. It was often stiff to manipulate and one's sleeve would catch on the barbed wire. But it was a point of honour and still is never to leave a man's gate open.

Annie Rooney, unfortunately, soon became very adept at opening of this type of gate. She would work patiently at the top loop, which was of plain wire with no barbs, till she got it free, and the other cows came to know that she could do this and would line up behind her at the gate waiting to be let through. Of course she was much too sly to do it when we were around, but if the cows were shut in the barnyard or pasture overnight, we would often find them gone in the morning. It taxed all Jim's and Father's ingenuity to invent a fastener she could not open. One common device instead of a loop was to have a sharpened stick on the end of a piece of wire attached to the side post. This would be brought around the top of the gate end and stuck into a small loop of wire, but it was child's play for the old roan cow to open this. They eventually figured out something that fooled her, but she was never really resigned to defeat and kept on trying.

The spruce trees the men had brought from the hills with wet sacks around their roots had to be put in as soon as possible. Mother had done her best to vary the square lines of the fireguard enclosure by making a curved path at the front from the edge of the grass to the little gate Father had put in. Chaddy and I gathered stones to mark off the edge of this path, then Mother made a flower-garden on each side, sowing annual seeds she had brought from Ontario.

The ones I remember especially were the Italian poppies with silky red petals and black centres, petunias of the mixed varieties that made a patch of colour all summer, candytuft, pansies and mignonette. Four of Father's little spruce trees were planted back of the flowers, so that before long we had a very pretty little garden spot. At the back door Mother planted sweet peas where they got the east sun and were sheltered from the dry west winds. The lawn was the original prairie grass, but Mother had the men cut it with a scythe, and she and Chaddy, Bee and I carried earth in pails to fill up the gopher holes. Then we put up the croquet set we had brought from Galt with us, and though there were still plenty of bumps and hollows, it only added to the fun of the game. People came from miles around to play, and the ministers returning from their Sunday circuit would stop over for a game. I was never a very good player, but Mother was excellent, Bee was a good steady player and Chaddy could hold her own with anyone. I remember an elderly Presbyterian preacher with a rather long white beard who enjoyed playing with her. He would say, "I like a foeman worthy of my steel," which I am afraid I never was. This old minister, Rev. Mr. Vance, was very good at roqueting, and when someone was in a good position for a wire, bang he would come and take you away with him saying, "It would be a kindness to leave you there, but it wouldn't be croquet."

Mother never allowed anyone to "scoop" the ball, that is, push it ahead with the mallet. You had to hit it cleanly. She didn't permit tight roqueting either, that is, holding your own ball in place with your foot against the ball you had roqueted, hitting your ball sharply with the mallet, thus sending the other one away across the lawn, while keeping your own where you wanted it. Mother frowned on this because it was not only dangerous, as you might hit your own foot, but it didn't require any skill. There was no scinece in it. We were allowed only to "loose roquet," that is, to place your ball behind the one you had roqueted and hit it in such a way that you went into position in one direction and the enemy was sent flying in another, so that it was

ready for you to roquet again after you went through your wire. It was a sort of billiard shot. Mother always held her mallet in one hand while the rest of used two, and she was very skilful at this loose roquet business.

Jim wasn't very good at the game. I think he and I were both too impatient. I remember on one occasion after the land across the road from us had been broken and wheat was growing there, Jim was so annoyed at missing a wire that he hit his ball a tremendous whack so that it went across our yard, across the road allowance and into the neighbor's wheat field. We tried to find it but we didn't like to trample the grain, and the thing completely disappeared. I don't think it ever did turn up.

One day in one of our farm papers, Chaddy and I saw an idea that took our fancy. A diagram showed how to build a "morning-glory bower." It consisted of a double circle of stones built up about a foot-and-a-half, with a space between the two circles filled with soil, like a modern "planter." An opening was to be finished in one side so that we might go in and out of the inner space. A pole was to be put up in the centre of this enclosure and morning-glories planted in the soil. When these grew they were to be trained to climb on strings attached to the top of the pole, making a sort of tent of flowers. We were fascinated by the idea and imagined how we would sit in our morning-glory bower and read or play house in a private place of our own.

It wasn't hard to find stones on our farm, but it was hard work carrying them and the soil in pails. Mother was as enthusiastic as we were and she measured the circle and laid it off for us, and she did the actual building of the "rockery," as she had a very true eye and capable hands. When all was finished we planted our seeds and waited impatiently for them to grow. They did sprout and grew a few inches, but the sun was so hot and the winds so dry in that exposed spot, that they never got to the stage of climbing at all.

We were bitterly disappointed and had to endure a great deal of teasing from Jim and Bee, but Mother said never mind. Another year we would plant sturdier flowers there

and have a pretty rockery, which we did. But all through the years it continued to be referred to as "morning-glory bower."

Chapter Twenty

WE GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE WILD FLOWERS AND BIRDS

Though there was still no school in 1905, Chaddy and I always found plenty to do. Besides helping Mother in the garden, we were never tired of exploring the big prairie just beyond our own fence. Our long walks with Buckles extended far and wide, and we were always finding new flowers to take home and show Mother. First of course, were the crocuses, coming through the brown prairie grass like little tufts of fur, and then opening up to show the pretty mauve petals and golden stamens. In some places the whole prairie would be purple with them. All prairie children love the crocus and feel when they have found the first one that spring is really here. Long ago the Manitoba children chose it for their provincial emblem, or else I'm sure Alberta would have had it. Of course it is not a true crocus at all, but belongs to the anemone family, "anemone patens" the botanists call it, and another name is the Pasque flower, or flower of Easter, because it blooms at that time and its color is the pale violet shade of Easter. But to prairie children it will always be the crocus.

If you want to know the names of all the flowers we found you may find them in Annora Brown's book "Old Man's Garden" with a description and woodcut of each and often an Indian legend connected with it. But her book wasn't written till nearly 50 years later, and we had no way of knowing the names of half the flowers. That didn't bother us, however, for we just gave them names of our own choosing.

In a shallow coulee not far from home we found a beautiful patch of flowers with wine-coloured petals turned back from a pointed yellow centre. This yellow part reminded us of a duck's yellow bill sticking out, so we called them "duck heads," not knowing for a long time that their

real name was "shooting stars," a much more poetical one than what we had chosen. We found clumps of a flower with tall blue spikes and leaves that fanned out in spokes like the stays of an umbrella and so we called it "the umbrella plant" till someone told us it was the wild lupine. Dixie loved their leaves in spring and would eat them hungrily. We tasted them and found they had a pleasant sour taste, so decided it was a sort of salad for him.

We had no trouble identifying the wild pink roses which by summertime were thick on the prairie. No flower ever had such a wonderful fragrance. The Alberta children made a happy choice when they voted for this flower for their provincial emblem.

The prairie birds were not as showy as the flowers. Since they all had to build their nests on the ground, nature had tried to make up for their lack of protection in trees by giving them inconspicuous feathers resembling their grassy surroundings, so that a bird might be sitting on a nest a few feet away and you would not see it.

The bird we loved most, of course, was the meadow lark. It was our harbinger of spring. Perched on a fence-post, head lifted to show the yellow breast and black necktie, it poured its short liquid warble, repeating it over and over at brief intervals, adding its sweetness to the warm prairie sunshine.

There were many other kinds of birds, of course, including a very sweet song sparrow, and a tiny bird that we called a lark because it would mount up and up in successive spurts till almost out of sight, and then suddenly drop like a dead thing. Then while still quite a distance from the ground, it would stop its downward plunge and up it would go again. We hadn't field-glasses and never really saw it close so I still cannot describe it.

In the slough down in the coulee the killdeers waded about all day making the mournful call that gives them their name. When Mother's trees grew, we gradually had more varieties of birds, even the occasional robin, while a pair of king birds made their nest every summer in the tallest spruce tree and ruled the roost over the other birds. There

were owls and many kinds of hawks. Jim shot a snowy northern owl one winter, a beautiful bird. He had learned some taxidermy and stuffed the owl, giving it big yellow glass eyes with black centres, which seemed to follow us reproachfully as it sat on its perch in the sitting room. We wished it had been left to fly about in the snow.

The hawks used to circle above our few precious chickens, but Buckles and the rooster had a pretty good combination alarm system. If Buckles saw the hawk first, he would give a sharp peculiar bark that he reserved for hawks, and begin running around the barnyard with his head raised to watch the hawk. The rooster would then give a long high-pitched warning call to the hens, and they would run for shelter or make themselves inconspicuous by squatting motionless in the dust till the hawk flew away. If the rooster saw it first, he gave his warning call and Buckles would come running from wherever he was and take over his protective duties with his barking and circling.

We had seen the wild geese flying south in great numbers far overhead in their "V" formations in the fall, and would run outside to watch them out of sight. After dark we would listen to their honking as they passed unseen through the night. It was a lonely, mysterious sound to us then, but when they passed over us again going north in the spring, their cry was a happy sound, because we knew it meant the winter was over.

When the men were working on the land they were often followed by a flock of Franklin's gulls, ready to swoop down on any insects or worms turned up. Father always said the mewling of a flock of gulls meant rain.

With the sprouting of our first crop Chaddy and I acquired a new job. The gophers much preferred the tender green shoots of grain to the tough prairie grass, and they soon began to make inroads on the crop. Instructions were published by the Agriculture Department at Regina on how to deal with them. Strychnine had to be mixed with soaked grain and a spoonful of this put at the mouth of each gopher hole. Chaddy and I had to go back and forth, systematically covering the ground, each of us with an old spoon and a

lard pail of the dangerous mixture. We were told to put the stuff far down in the holes so none of our pets or stock or wild birds could get at it, and we certainly took no chance. Unfortunately a cat was likely to get a poisoned gopher, and then there was grief and tears. At first we had only one cat, Laddie, and he and Buckles would be closely guarded at poisoning time. This gopher poisoning was not a job Chaddy and I liked, but our opinion wasn't asked. At this time there were quite a few striped gophers left, though later they entirely disappeared, driven out, it was said, by their bigger grey cousins. One day after a poisoning job I sat down and wrote a story about one of these little striped gophers who ran away from home. I called it "Stripes the Prodigal" and told about all the adventures he had and how glad he was to get home again. This was the story I have already mentioned in a previous chapter, which I sent to the Prairie Chicken Club in the Winnipeg Telegram.

Chapter Twenty-One

THE PRESBYTERIANS START A MISSION

In the spring of 1905 the Presbyterian Church decided to start a mission in our community. Mrs. Linton said they were welcome to hold services in her home, and the offer was gladly accepted, partly, perhaps, because the Lintons like the Wilsons had "an instrument." Rev. A. C. Bryan, a pioneer Presbyterian minister in Nanton, came out to conduct the first service. The word had got around and quite a few people had collected, but actually they were the same people who went to the Methodist services at Wilsons', and these included not only Methodists and Presbyterians but Anglicans, Baptists, the occasional Roman Catholic and one or two avowed agnostics. Some of them went just to get out and have a chat with their neighbors, and a few to get the minister to post letters for them in town. As the Methodist service was held only every two weeks, the Presbyterians took the alternate week and there was no over-lapping and no hard feelings.

In good weather when Father was working the horses we had to walk to church, for Father thought the horses worked so hard they deserved a rest on Sunday. Jim was the privileged one, as he had Dixie to ride, but it was pleasant walking together through the sweet-smelling prairie grass especially in the spring when there was a pale carpet of crocuses, followed by other flowers in their gay sequence.

Before the service started, if it was at the Wilson home, Norval would come out and look in every direction to see if any more people were coming. The minister would delay starting till everyone had arrived. The Wilsons had a one-roomed house with a large floor space and the congregation sat on boards which rested on chairs or wooden boxes. One Sunday a board which didn't have enough support for the weight put upon it, suddenly broke with a loud crack and landed its occupants on the floor. This created a diversion

in the middle of the sermon which we kids at least enjoyed very much.

Mrs. Wilson played for the singing on her instrument, on top of which she kept some cookies for her little daughter Lavina, and it was not uncommon to hear her little voice piping up during the service, "Mama, I want a cookie." The hymns were from a book of gospel songs quite different from anything our family had been used to. We sang such hymns as "Count Your Blessings," "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam," and "She only touched the hem of his garment." All the hymns had refrains and the tunes were lively. I remember one which went—

"There is a fountain filled with blo-od, filled with blo-od,
filled with blo-od

There is a fountain filled with blo-od drawn from Im-
manuel's veins

and then it went on with the refrain "O beautiful fountain." It was a far cry from the stately dignity of the psalms we had sung in our church back in Galt: "Duke Street," "Old Hundreth," "The Lord's my Shepherd" and "By Babel's Streams we sat and Wept." Ours was a branch of the Presbyterian Church which sang only psalms, believing that hymns were "not inspired." While even we children realized that the hymns we sang at Wilsons' were inferior both in words and music, we could not help enjoying their bright catchy tunes, and sang them lustily while Mrs. Wilson thumped them out on the piano.

The first Methodist minister was Rev. L. R. McDonald. I can't remember anything he said in his sermons, but I recall how he stood behind the Wilsons' dining-room table and was so close to his congregation that he literally preached "over our heads," staring at the back wall as he talked. He preached at Nanton in the morning, our district in the afternoon and Stavely in the evening, getting around by horse and buggy. He usually spent the night in Stavely and worked his way back to Nanton in a leisurely way, stopping at the married settlers' homes for a meal here and there, for he was a bachelor. I have already mentioned what an attraction

our croquet set proved for him and later preachers in both the Methodist and Presbyterian flock.

Mrs. Linton had a two-storey house much like ours. The sitting-room where the church services were held was much smaller than Wilsons' room, but the stair, an open one, went up from it and provided seats for a number, while some overflowed into the kitchen. The Lintons had two cats, Quaker and Booker T. Washington who used to come to the services and one Sunday Quaker came in and rubbed endearingly around the minister's legs, which added to Chaddy's and my interest in the service.

The first student preacher the Presbyterians had was James R. Urquhart from Queen's University. He came in his vacation in 1905 and we saw quite a bit of him. He enjoyed the croquet games very much and he liked to come on churning day so he could have a drink of buttermilk.

After he went back to Divinity School in the fall we had an ordained minister, Rev. Simon Lazarus Fraser, a name which greatly delighted us kids. We may have imagined that the "L" stood for Lazarus, but that is the way I recall it. His first sermon was based on the text "Train a child up in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." This amused his congregation very much, as a large percentage of them were bachelors. It probably came handy to him on the top of the barrel. Mr. Fraser had a farm near Stavely and his heart was really in farming, so he soon gave up his preaching charge.

The one I remember coming next was another ordained preacher, Rev. Mr. Darling. He was said to be quite a scholarly man, but what interested me chiefly was the beauty of his voice and the expression and clear enunciation with which he read the scripture lessons. Passages I had heard all my life suddenly took on new meaning, and Mr. Darling sometimes chose other parts of the bible I had never heard a minister read before. One Sunday he read the last chapter of Ecclesiastes so beautifully yet so simply that its poetry made a profound impression on me. After that I would not miss a Sunday and bullied Jim into hitching the team to

our stoneboat sleigh to drive me to church on one of the coldest days of winter.

People used to wonder why such a well-educated man as Mr. Darling was content to preach to a handful of people in a pioneer community, especially when he seemed to take no interest in the farm and ranch life around him, or in anything western. People began to say it was because he was lazy and that he lay in bed till all hours reading. His active but rather sharp-tongued little wife had all the outside chores to do and wasn't backward in telling people what she thought about life in a small prairie town, and indeed what she thought of her husband. Finally they moved away and the church women who went to clean the manse were scandalized to find how dirty it was and the whisper even went round that there were piles of dried up chewing tobacco on the floor behind the bed, which the minister had spit there as he lay in bed reading. This may have been mere gossip, for ministers and their families are the subject of much talk in small communities. To my mind he recalls the lovely phrases "or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain . . ." He was the first to show me the beauty of the English tongue in the King James version of the bible.

Mame Linton organized a few of the Presbyterian flock into a little choir. She sang the alto part in the hymns and Chaddy and I had a fierce argument over this. Chaddy said "alto" meant the way Mame held her mouth and pressed her chin back against her neck while singing. I maintained it had nothing to do with this but meant the lower notes that harmonized with the soprano.

Quite early on, the women of both the Methodist and Presbyterian groups formed separate Ladies' Aid Societies. Mrs. Linton was president of the Presbyterians and mother was vice-president. The Methodist minutes were all kept intact and may still be consulted, an interesting historical record, but somewhere along the way the Presbyterian records both for the church and the Ladies' Aid were lost.

One event that stands out in my memory was a lawn social put on by the Presbyterian ladies at our home in

the summer of 1905. It was the first thing of its kind in the whole region round, and people came in wagons, buggies and on horseback from as far east as the Little Bow, from Nanton and Stavely to the north and south and from the foothills way in the west. Besides croquet we had arranged other games. Mother had made a bean-bag game consisting of a sort of wooden easel with a hole in the middle into which the players had to throw bags of beans of varying sizes and counts. The smallest one counted the most because it was the hardest one to get in.

Jake Voisey, an old neighbor of ours from Galt, had arrived shortly before and he superintended the making of freezers of ice cream and big cans of lemonade. He was a handsome jolly man and made a wonderful barker, enticing everyone with quips and jokes to come up and try his wares. They didn't need much urging, for ice cream was a rare treat to the settlers in those early days.

Of course there were sandwiches and cake and tea as well, and the folks separated into groups according to their sex to have a good old talk over their tea. It was a perfect summer day with not a cloud in the blue sky. The only shade was on the north side of the house where seats had been put, but nobody seemed to mind the sun. Mother's flower garden was a great attraction and I remember Mrs. Straughan making a beeline to the flowers as soon as she arrived without stopping to speak to anyone. She had not arrived in the country in time to get a garden started and the flowers were a reminder to her of her garden she had left behind her back in Ontario. She and all her children had green thumbs, and soon the Straughan homestead on Mosquito Creek was a show place for its flowers.

The money made at the lawn social helped out the meagre finances of the Ladies' Aid, but everyone felt that the real success had been in the wonderful get-together of so many neighbors.

Among other projects undertaken by the group was the sending of clothing to a family that had been burned out by a prairie fire. A bigger undertaking still was paying the expenses of a lame boy to a hospital in Winnipeg to have

his foot operated on. Over 50 years later I found letters concerning these two projects among some papers of my mother's.

They were often hard put to finance such ventures as these, as there were so few of them and money was scarce among homesteaders. They decided one time to bring out a cook-book with recipes contributed by all the women in the community. This is quite common now among women's organizations, but the catch with our ladies was that no one in the community had a typewriter, and the cost of printing them commercially was far beyond their means. In the end, Mother wrote nearly all of them with pen and ink in her beautiful script and Mabel Hammill painted the covers with little water colours of flowers and fruit.

Among the recipes handed in for Mother to copy was one for "Prairie Pyramid Cake" with the name of Mrs. William H. Hawk signed to it. Mother had written so much that she copied the recipes more or less automatically without thinking of the ingredients. After the books had been finished and sold, Warwick Linton and Hugh Hawk confessed that "Prairie Pyramid Cake" was a hoax. They had concocted it between them and signed Mrs. Hawk's name as a joke, as she was considered the best cook in the neighborhood. They offered to buy the materials if some one would make the cake, but no one took them up on it. For one thing there was a pound of butter and $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups of sugar required and the result did not look promising.

Chapter Twenty-Two

A SNOW-STORM IN JUNE

When we first came to Alberta we heard repeated tales from the old-timers about "the big May snow-storm." Some years, they said, the snow was so deep and blown into such high drifts by the wind that many cattle perished in it. When no such storm occurred in May, 1905, we thought that the earlier settlers had been pulling our leg and telling tall tales. We were to learn as time went on that some years the May storm was all it had been described to be, and that snow might fall any month in the year in Alberta.

One warm summer day, the first June that we "women-folk" were in the country, we were invited over to the Linton home for the day. So after the housework and the stable chores were done, Bee set the table for Father's and Jim's dinner and left the food ready for them to warm up, and we four set off to walk the three miles or so over the prairie to the Linton homestead.

It was very pleasant walking through the grass and flowers on such a beautiful June day with hardly a cloud in the clear sky. I do not think that anything is quite such a wonderful blue as our Alberta skies, sweeping unbroken by forest or buildings from horizon to horizon. Though Mother was in her late forties, she was a good walker with a light springing step, and none of us felt sorry for ourselves that the men and horses were too busy to drive us.

There was a warm welcome and a good dinner at our destination. The time flew with plenty of chatter. Mrs. Linton was making a new quilt in the necktie pattern and cut out duplicate blocks for Mother. We younger ones were more interested in discussing any fun going on in the neighborhood.

The time flew and we were surprised to notice that the sky was suddenly dark with clouds, and a strong cold wind had begun to blow. Soon the air was full of whirling snow-

flakes which fell more thickly every moment, with the north wind whipping them into a blinding blizzard. We could hardly believe that such a change could happen so quickly.

We knew the men would never come for us as they would only get lost in such a storm with no fences or roads to guide them, and of course for us to attempt to walk home would have been madness. So we settled down for a much longer visit than we had expected. Hume and Warwick and Douglas came in out of the storm and after supper we all played games around the kitchen table while the wind howled drearily around the house and shook it as we knew ours would be shaking at home.

Their upstairs was divided into two bedrooms with Mame and her mother in the front one. Mrs. Linton had recently done a very daring thing, something new in the neighborhood. She had bought an incubator, and as it had cost her what seemed a huge amount to poor homesteaders then, she wanted to set it in a safe place. The only such place available was their bedroom, where nothing could get at it and she and Mame could watch the temperature which depended on a coal-oil lamp. The eggs had been set for three weeks and this was the big night when they were to hatch.

Mother slept with Mrs. Linton and Bee with Mame, while Chaddy and I had a "shake-down" made for us on the floor. It was a very exciting night for us, sleeping in someone else's house, listening to a howling blizzard in the middle of June and through it all hearing the "peep, peep, peep" of the chicks and watching them burst from their shells. We felt we had a grandstand seat.

Next morning the sun had come out and was shining again in a blue and cloudless sky. The wind had died down and the blizzard might have been only a dream, except that the grass and the flowers, the garden and wheatfield were covered over completely with snow, which the wind had drifted into bigger piles here and there. It was not too deep, fortunately, and as the June sun climbed higher, its heat soon softened it into slush and then melted it altogether.

Father and Jim arrived in good time for us with Buckskin and Queenie in the wagon and Buckles along enjoying

the snow. They didn't want to cook their own meals any longer than necessary. They told us some of the neighbors' horses that were out on the range had drifted away south ahead of the storm, but ours were snugly tied in the stable. We heard later that some of the horses had got as far as the Old man River near Fort Macleod before they were found and brought home.

After this we weren't quite so skeptical about what the old-timers told us.

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE DAY THE COLT ARRIVED

In the spring of 1905 Father decided it wasn't very satisfactory to go on sharing teams with the Ellisons as there was so much work to be done on the land, so he went to Nanton and bought a team from Martin Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong Sr. had homesteaded just outside Nanton, and his descendants have played an active part in the life of the community.

The team Father bought didn't match very well. One of them was a chunky black mare called Jess. She was a quiet, willing animal and later on we were able to drive her single in our little makeshift sleigh. Her team-mate was a tall sorrel that had been broken to the saddle and was very easy to ride. He was also a good worker in the team and all the years we had him must have made a tremendous contribution to the breaking and farming of our land. (As I explained in an earlier chapter Father decided to call him after his previous owner. Martin Armstrong was commonly known as "Mart" but Father, who rarely got a name right, thought they said "Mark" and so the new sorrel became Mark, a fine name for a fine horse.)

Though they did not discuss such things before Chaddy and me, we got to know that Jess was in an "interesting condition," so we were excited but not surprised one summer morning when Father came in and told us Jess had a colt. Of course everyone rushed out to see it. Jess, the proud mother, nuzzled her long-legged son affectionately and at the same time managed to keep between him and the staring excited humans, for fear they might hurt her darling.

What should we call him? This time it was easy to decide. We had all been reading Owen Wister's novel "The Virginian" so of course we had to call the colt "Monte," after the hero's horse.

Father decided Jess and her foal should be taken down

to the pasture field, the forty acres he had fenced including the slough and the spring from which we got our water supply. Here the mare would have plenty of water and grass and nothing but the cows to disturb her.

Then a new problem came up. Father had still not found time or money to curb the spring and put in a pump. It was fairly deep and the little colt might accidentally slip into it and be drowned or break a leg. He thought it would be a good idea if Chaddy and I went down and kept watch. We thought it would be a good idea too, a nice lazy day with nothing to do but sit in the sun and watch the doings of the new colt.

After breakfast Mother put up lunches for us, and we also took rugs to sit on, books to read and two big black umbrellas, the kind people used then which were referred to as "gamps" because Dickens' disreputable character Sairey Gamp always carried one. We weren't afraid it might rain, but we wanted the umbrellas to shade us from the hot sun, as there wasn't a vestige of any other shade in the whole pasture.

Father rode Mark and led Jess, and Monte followed his mother. Chaddy and I trudged along with our baggage, bringing up the rear. We wore our old-fashioned sunbonnets that would look very quaint to children today. Buckles was unwillingly left behind for fear he might disturb Jess.

The mare, after one good drink, went off to the far end of the pasture and quietly began eating grass, the colt staying close beside her and helping himself to refreshments from time to time.

We spread our rugs on the grass near the spring, opened up our big black parasols, and stretching out comfortably in their shade began to read. Chaddy had taken along Grimms' "Fairy Tales" and soon was deep in "Hansel and Gretel" and other favorites which she read over and over and never seemed to tire of. I had taken along "David Copperfield" but it wasn't a happy choice for I soon got to the place where David's mother died and poor David, brought home from school, had to listen to the sound of the man hammering

in the nails of her coffin, while the greedy dishonest waiter ate up all David's dinner.

Everything was very still there in that prairie pasture. There were no planes flying noisily overhead in those days, no cars passing by on the trail. When we got tired of reading we would wander around a bit and pick flowers, or play games together. It was very hot even in the shade of the umbrellas and sometimes we would get so sleepy we would doze off for a little while, but we were afraid not to keep awake because of our responsibility for the colt.

Jess and Monte, however, still stayed at a distance and paid no attention to us. The cows at the other end of the pasture got tired of grazing and lay down to chew their cuds in the hot sunshine.

Now and then a meadow lark would sit on a fence post and sing its sweet short melody for us. A pair of killdeer waded in the nearby slough and repeated their plaintive "killdeer! killdeer!" over and over till we got very tired of it, but there were not many birds for us to watch.

After a while, Chaddy squinted up at the sun and said "I'm sure it must be nearly dinner time."

I thought so too, as we seemed to have been there for hours. We hadn't a watch, of course, and we weren't clever enough to tell the time by the sun. The house was on the other side of the ridge that ran across the homestead, so we couldn't see if the men had gone in from the field to dinner yet. Like most kids we were nearly always hungry, and today we had been too excited to eat much breakfast. So we opened our lunch pails and "dug in."

Nothing could have tasted better than the sandwiches made with thick slices of homemade bread and bacon, and the plain ginger cookies, washed down with water from the spring. When we had eaten every scrap, we stretched out again and returned to our reading. However I reached the place where David's stepfather Mr. Murdstone whipped David and David bit him, and I just couldn't bear to read any more of it. I lay there with the tears running down into my ears.

Then we decided to take turns reading a favorite story

from Grimm out loud to each other. I chose "The Valiant Little Tailor" and Chaddy's was "King Thrushbeard."

By this time we were sure it must be getting on toward supper time, so we closed our umbrellas, gathered up our other belongings and started for home. As we came up over the ridge and saw our house and stable, we felt almost as if we had been away on a journey.

When we got to the house we were amazed to find that it was only a little after eleven o'clock and Mother was hurrying to get dinner ready for the men.

"Go and dig me some potatoes," she said, thrusting a pail at us.

It seemed almost fun to be doing something away from the hot stillness of the pasture. I certainly felt much happier digging potatoes than reading about the cruelties of Mr. Murdstone.

Father asked us how we got along and we told him. He said he guessed Jess was too wise to let Monte fall into the spring.

Chapter Twenty-Four

ALBERTA BECOMES A PROVINCE

In 1905 there had begun to be a lot of talk as well as write-ups in the newspapers about Alberta becoming a province. Up till now she had been one of the four Districts of the North West Territories which had Regina for their capital and seat of government. The other three Districts were Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Athabasca. Now these four districts were to be divided into two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, each with its own capital. Ours in Alberta was to be Edmonton, a decision which caused much heart-burning and name-calling on the part of its bitter rival, Calgary. An interesting side issue was that Alberta's eastern boundary was moved further east to 110 degrees longitude or the 4th meridian, so that places like Medicine Hat which had been in Assiniboia or Saskatchewan, were now in Alberta.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier introduced the Autonomy Bill to provide for the two new provinces on February 21st, 1905 and it became law July 20th, though it was not till September 1st that the four North West Territories ceased to be, and the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan came into existence. In Alberta the formal inauguration ceremony took place at Edmonton on September 1st with Sir Wilfrid Laurier in attendance and much oratory and a great display of bunting, according to the papers.

As the first of July drew near, we heard that there was going to be a big celebration in Nanton in honour of our coming status. My nephew Dick Hawk, the tall, red-headed youngest son of my sister Bee, now publishes the Nanton News. At my request he has searched the files of the paper for 1905, and reports that while the issue following July 1st had a big front page account of the celebration, there was no mention that it was in connection with Alberta becoming a province. He says actually there is no reference to that in

any issue that year, but on September 7th, the heading of the paper which up to then had been "Nanton, North West Territories," was changed to "Nanton, Alberta." The lack of interest in the political change may have been due to the fact that the Nanton News changed ownership about this time, being sold by Mr. Bender the publisher to two Americans, one of them Mr. Z. Jessup of Seattle, and naturally the Americans would not understand what all the furor was about. The Jessups retained ownership of the paper for nearly 50 years and still hold an interest. However, I remember it as a celebration of our promotion to provincial rank held on the regular Dominion Day holiday to make it a bang-up affair.

Accordingly that day everyone headed for Nanton and we went too, making an early start to cover the ten miles with Buck and Queen in the lumber wagon, so we would be in time for the goings-on. Mother was the only one who didn't go. She had borrowed Mrs. Linton's incubator and the chickens were due to hatch that day.

We kids were quite excited, for after months out on the homestead, Nanton with its streets and stores seemed a real metropolis, and the occasion was a big one for us. The team was left at the livery barn and we all set off to explore the town. To us, the crowd milling around seemed immense.

There was a man outside the Auditorium Hotel ringing a bell and shouting, "Don't go hungry for two bits. We've fed a thousand and can feed a thousand more."

We had never heard the expression "two bits" and did not know at first that it meant twenty-five cents. We were told that the expression originated in the fact that the Mexican dollar was divided into eight parts or "bits" so that a quarter was two bits. For this small sum the Auditorium served a full course dinner, but most of us could not afford even this. Father and Jim went there with some of the other men, but Bee and Chaddy and I joined Mame Linton and other women and girls and had a picnic lunch with sandwiches and things we had brought. I remember we saw some bananas that looked most inviting hanging in a store window. We hadn't tasted any since we came west, so we went in and Mame

Linton asked how much they were a dozen. When she was told "sixty-five cents" we all hastily withdrew, as it seemed a terrible price to us. We were used to paying less than half that amount in Galt, but now, more than half a century later, sixty-five cents would be considered a give-away price.

Nanton certainly went all out to put on a good show that day. There was a big parade led by the I.O.O.F. and the Claresholm band, which had come for the occasion. The Macleod and Stavely baseball teams had come up to play Nanton which had a good team. Walt Hawk from our district played second base. I can't remember which town won that day.

There were horse races including a cowboy race, an Indian race, a ladies' race and a kids' race. There were foot races too and a bucking contest which seemed very wild and woolly to us green-horns.

During the afternoon I met in with a girl named Beulah Slade. She was dark and interesting looking and a little older than I. We seemed to click right away and had a great deal to talk about. I felt I had found a kindred spirit. That was over fifty years ago and I have never seen her since nor heard of her. She will likely be a grandmother now if she is still living, but I can still see her a dark eager teen-aged girl holding my hand as we dodged in and out of the crowd, more interested in talking about our own affairs than watching the sports.

All in all it was a big day and we hated to climb into the wagon and head the horses for home across the prairie. Even with the long Alberta summer days, it was dark before we got home, and as we climbed the rise to the west of our place, we could see the light Mother had put in the window to guide us. Buckles heard us and came out a quarter of a mile or so to meet us and we took him into the wagon with us.

When we got into the house, we told Mother about the exciting events of the day. She always liked when we had a good time. We ate the supper she had ready for us and then Chaddy and I climbed sleepily into bed, not realizing that we helped to make history that day.

Chapter Twenty-Five

WE GO SASKATOON PICKING

A mile and a half north of our homestead Mosquito Creek wound its sluggish way in and out over the prairie. Its slow movement was due to the almost level ground over which it flowed, but with quiet persistence over untold periods of time it had cut its way quite deeply into the soil, so that in some places there were fairly high cut-banks. In the spring when the snow and ice melted, it rushed along like a torrent between the banks, washing out bridges that had been built after the coming of the settlers, and drowning stock. By summer it was often reduced to stagnant pools, hardly connected with each other. Some of these pools were deep enough to swim in and Jim and Warwick Linton and other boys used to ride there for a dip on hot evenings, but we girls never went. The bottom was rather muddy and we had seen snakes in the water and other forms of animal life.

In the winter time the boys would clear off a sheet of the ice near Straughans' or some other place where they could go in to get warm, and play hockey. We girls used to enjoy skating on the creek if the weather wasn't too cold. We could have quite a good skate when the ice was clear of snow without going far, as the creek looped in and out so much. As a rule, however, our feet would be too cold to skate by the time we got there.

In the ranching days Mosquito Creek was very important to the ranchers who ran their cattle all through that part of the country. Naturally they resented the homesteaders coming in and fencing off the creek, thus depriving them of their vital water supply. The Ingram family who owned quite a few cattle were wise enough to take up homesteads on the creek themselves so that they had access to it for their cattle. When I inquired at the Alberta Lands Department at the time of the 1955 Jubilee to find out who were

the first settlers in the Parkland district, I was told that Mrs. Sarah Ingram, a widow, and her sons James and John filed on homesteads in section 24, township 15 in December 1901.

Immediately north of our place the creek had very high rugged banks so that the trail ended here. It would probably seem a very simple matter to bulldoze it down nowadays, but in our time it was considered quite impassable. On the high bank on our side, which faced north, there was quite a growth of bushes and stunted trees, and that first summer of 1905 we were told that there were saskatoon berries growing there. We had never seen saskatoons, nor even heard of them, but we were so hungry for raw fruit that Bee and Chaddy and I, wearing sunbonnets and carrying pails, set off on foot one hot summer morning to pick some. Later on Mrs. Lowther and her little brother Leslie Hawk drove over and joined forces with us.

We found the berries hanging on their bushes in dark mulberry colored clusters, and of course we sampled them right away. They had a sweet but not very exciting flavor. Some might even call them flat, but they surely tasted good to us.

David Thompson, the great western explorer, gives an honored place to the saskatoon in his 1787-88 journal. He calls it "misaskutum" berry and says among other things "It is very sweet and nourishing, the favorite fruit of small birds and bears. It may be safely eaten as long as the appetite continues."

Our appetite continued quite a while but we finally got to work and filled our little lard pails which in turn we emptied into the big pails we had brought. It was rather rough work as the bank was steep where the bushes grew and the footing uncertain. We had to reach up and hold the branches down as we picked and our arms got scratched.

We had brought our lunches and at noon we sat in the shade and ate them. Then we went back for more berries as we wanted to take home as many as possible. Finally the berries began to get scarce and the afternoon sun was very hot, so that I for one was ready to quit and go home,

but the others were more ambitious. Bee wondered if there might be good patches of the berries further up the creek.

"My head's aching," I grumbled. "Let's go home."

"You sit in the shade with Leslie," said Mrs. Lowther, "and we'll go to look for more berries. If we find some, we'll send Chaddy to let you know."

So off they went and left me with Leslie. Pretty soon he began to complain that he was thirsty.

"Well you'll just have to wait till you get home," I told him.

"Why can't I get a drink from the crick?"

"Because the water's dirty."

"Why?"

"Because the cattle walk through it and there are crawly things in it too."

"Why?"

I didn't answer him as I felt cross. The sun had got around so that the rock no longer shaded us and it was very hot.

"Let's go down and cool our feet in the crick," Leslie said after a while.

At this place the bank was very steep. "If you go down I won't help you up," I threatened.

"I guess I can climb up without your help," he retorted.

I watched him as he picked his way down among the bushes. Then I shut my eyes and lay back on the grass in what little shade I could find and waited for Chaddy. Suddenly there was a loud shriek from Leslie. I went down the hill at a reckless speed expecting to see him disappearing in the sluggish water of the creek. Instead he was trying to climb through the bushes to get away from a surprised looking red cow on the other side of the stream.

I helped him up the bank, for he was just a little boy of pre-school age, and we had another tiresome wait with a monotonous conversation of questions and answers. Finally Leslie threw his hat down the bank and refused to go after it, for he remembered the red cow. So down I had to go again and this time my temper got the better of me, and I gave him a cuff on the head along with his hat. He went

off howling up the creek to find his sister and tell her what I had done. I should have followed him but I was afraid Mrs. Lowther would be cross with me. My head was aching more than ever, and as there was still no sign of Chaddy or the others coming back, I decided to go home alone.

The mile and a half seemed much longer than it did on the way down, and when at last I got home to the cool haven of our sitting-room, I found the minister (I forget which one) there.

I went out to the kitchen to tell Mother my troubles but she was getting supper for the minister and had no time to listen.

"I'm sorry your head's aching," she said "but we have no sugar for tea, and I wonder if you could go to Ellison's or Louis Roy's and borrow some."

I decided to go to Louis' though it was further, as I did not want to meet the saskatoon pickers on the way. Buckles went with me and got into a fight at Louis' place with Curly. The excitement took my mind off my troubles and I started for home quite cheered up.

Meantime Bee and Chaddy had arrived home in an indignant frame of mind, because not only had I deserted them, but in my haste I had left my saskatoons in the shade, so they had to carry them as well as their own. Actually Mrs. Lowther had given them a lift as far as Ellison's corner so they hadn't so far to carry them, but Mrs. Lowther was annoyed because I had cuffed Leslie and they had to bear the brunt of it.

When I got back they couldn't say much because the minister was there but they gave me black looks. They had washed themselves and put on clean dresses, while I looked and felt in disgrace with my rumpled dress and hot sweaty face. I wouldn't come in to supper but went off to the garden to eat green peas and indulge in bitter thoughts.

"Even if I did leave them to carry the berries, they should have let me know where they were. It wasn't any fun looking after Leslie," I thought. I could hear the cheerful supper sounds of laughing voices and clinking dishes and felt very sorry for myself.

Jim had brought the cows into the barnyard so I quietly got the milk pail from the bench at the back of the house and went out to milk. Chaddy came out too but she wouldn't speak to me. She milked Fanny Fern and then hurried off to have a game of croquet with the minister. I started in on Lassie, but as though infected with my irritation, she switched her hard tail at flies, whacking me on the head each time. Finally I fastened her tail to a barb in the wire fence and she was so furious when she found it caught, that she kicked and planted her foot square in the milk pail which was nearly full.

Jim, who was busy attending to the horses, saw this performance and laughed. In a rage I threw what was left of the milk over the cow and she ran off across the yard.

Then weeping with frustration I went over to old Roany, set my stool down beside her, and burying my head against her shaggy side, began to milk her rather roughly, but the big cow never stirred. After a time the soft churn-churn of the milk in the pail began to have a soothing effect on me. I wiped my tears and stopped scowling. Roany went on peacefully chewing her cud and gazing with dreamy eyes at the sunset above the Rockies.

"Roany doesn't care a bit if I'm freckled and fat and bad-tempered," I thought.

I began to feel rather ashamed and confessed as much to Roany there in the barnyard in the quiet of the twilight. Father came and carried my pail of frothing milk to the house. I told him I would take the cows down to the pasture.

Down the trail we went with Buckles trying to walk sedately behind the cows, but continually darting out to investigate some gopher hole or strange animal scent. If a cow took a run at him with lowered head, he would dodge swiftly under the nearby fence, and when safely there, would yawn nonchalantly to show that he wasn't afraid.

Lassie still dripped from her shower bath and now and then tossed her head and snorted as though still angry at the indignity she had received.

It was almost dark when we got to the pasture gate.

The red and gold of the west had changed to purple. The cows filed through the gate one by one making little clicking noises with their hoofs as they walked. Roany led the way down a narrow cattle trail toward the spring, and soon they were indistinct in the shadows.

Buckles and I raced happily home and I ran into the house just as the minister was leaving.

"Good-bye Georgina," he said to me, shaking hands in a friendly way. He probably wondered at the improvement in my expression, and if he had known that a shaggy old cow had anything to do with it, he would have wondered more .

We all enjoyed the saskatoons in spite of my flare up. We were told by old-timers to cook the berries with rhubarb to add flavor and juice to them, as the saskatoon is rather a dry berry, but we hadn't any rhubarb as yet. We liked them stewed or canned and we found that they made very good pies. We also ate them raw with sugar and cream. Prairie housewives learned how to can them without sugar in cold water so that they might be used for pies in the middle of winter. Nearly every canning booklet issued by the government for Western Canada still includes directions on how to can saskatoons.

The Indians had long had their own methods of preserving them. They dried them, and pounded them with dry meat to make a berry pemmican. They also had a way of cooking them in layers between hot stones. In her book "Old Man's Garden" Annora Brown quotes from Daniel Harmon's Journal to describe this process. Her whole chapter on saskatoons is very interesting with its delightful woodcuts of the berries. She describes the religious ceremonies of the Indians in which they gave thanks to the earth and the sun for this berry. Though we did not hold such a picturesque ceremony over it, we were very thankful to have it, as were all the early settlers.

Our expedition to Mosquito Creek was the first of what became an annual saskatoon picking event. After the homesteaders got driving horses and later, cars, they would go far back into the foothills where the berries grew more

luxuriantly than along prairie creeks. Even today when great varieties of fruit are shipped in, and some hardy types are even grown in the prairie gardens, folks still cannot resist the urge to go saskatoon picking, and seem to get as much fun out of it as we did over fifty years ago.

Chapter Twenty-Six

OUR FIRST PICNIC TO THE HILLS

Work on the homestead was never done, either for men or women, but nearly everyone in those days seemed to be glad of an excuse now and then for a little fun. So when it got round to July that first summer and someone suggested a picnic to the hills, most folks agreed it was a good idea. There weren't any telephones nor radios to spread the news but young fellows rode about on horseback and neighbors passed the news along as to time and place. The picnic was to be held in Pine Coulee, not too far back in the hills for most of the settlers to reach comfortably. It was to be an all-day affair with dinner and supper both, so all the women began baking and deciding what food they would take.

The day of the picnic dawned as perfect a summer day as we kids had hoped it would be. We all went in the wagon and a happier bunch couldn't have been found. The road allowance was still not fenced and our trail wound happily through the prairie grass and flowers with the foothills looming up ahead. As we went further west we began to see tiger lilies blooming along the trail and Chaddy and I would get so excited we would make Father stop now and then to let us pick them. We decorated the horses' bridles with them and we all wore them on our hats.

We could see rigs coming in all directions. One mud-spattered democrat had got stuck in a slough which looked quite firm when they started to cross. The horses and driver had had a hard tussle to get free. By way of a danger sign to those that followed they had left a red handkerchief tied to a whip stuck in the slough.

When we got to the picnic grounds we kids all went off to explore and left the elders to visit with each other, the men to talk about farm problems and the women their own special interests as they spread table-cloths on the grass and began preparing dinner.

Chaddy and I went for a walk with some of the girls down through the coulee, a deep gully like a crack in the earth which nature had healed by covering the banks with trees and bushes. Willows and poplars and spruce grew so closely together in some places that one could not get through except by following the narrow cattle trails that led down to the creek at the bottom. From the top of the coulee the noise of the creek sounded so loud that we expected to see a big stream and were surprised when we got down to it to find it was just a tiny rivulet. Its noisy chatter was due to the fact that its descent, unlike that of Mosquito Creek, was steep and its bed was rocky.

After the hot prairie the creek seemed very cool and refreshing to us and we set out to follow it through the coulee. Because of the steepness of the banks we had to pick our way carefully and keep crossing and recrossing the creek. Chaddy being more reckless than the rest of us slipped off a stone a couple of times and got her feet wet. At one place there was a tree growing in the middle of the creek and Chaddy and one of the other girls insisted on climbing it, which they did without mishap except for another foot wetting for Chaddy.

Here and there huge rocks towered above the creek and in one place a large chunk of sandstone had fallen and broken into jagged pieces right in the stream which gurgled its way through them and came out in a tiny waterfall. We had an exciting time crawling over the broken rocks. They skinned our hands and knees and were rough on our clothes.

At last we reached an open place where the coulee widened out a bit. We sat down to rest in the shade of tall cottonwoods and enjoyed the rustle of the leaves and the murmur of the stream. The coulee might seem very ordinary to us now if we went back, but coming from the level treeless prairie, we thought it all very beautiful.

We were getting pretty hungry and decided it would be a good idea if we could take a shortcut up over the bank instead of going back the rough way we had come. Chaddy nimbly led the way up while I puffed in the rear.

A short time later a stout elderly gentleman standing

above was amazed to see Chaddy's head and then the others pop up from below. We found that the windings of the coulee had brought us back just a little distance from our starting point.

Over on the grass the meal was spread and the picnickers were just about to sit down. A farmer from Ontario was asked to say grace.

"Lord we thank thee for the fruits of the earth spread out before us," he was saying.

"If it weren't for the canned goods we'd come pretty shy of the fruits of the earth," Jim whispered to us.

The pioneers sat down and fell to on a conglomeration of sandwiches, salads, pickles, ham, devilled eggs, cakes, tarts and pies of several varieties. Chicken pie got mixed with cherry preserves on our plates and we ate it with a spoon and speared olives with a hat-pin, for ladies wore long hat-pins in those days. Everyone laughed and talked and ate and got acquainted with other homesteaders. "The fruits of the earth" were disappearing so rapidly that the women packed away the remainder, while it still remained, to do for supper.

After dinner an exciting baseball game took place between the younger women and men. Mr. Hawk was chosen umpire and bravely accepted this difficult post. Some of the men played on the Nanton team but the way they allowed themselves to be put out by their female opponents showed that the days of chivalry were not dead. One of the men accidentally caught a ball but before the cheers of the on-lookers had fairly begun, he dropped it and the umpire called "safe" for the runner. The score was something like 35-29 in favor of the girls. Everybody cheered wildly and the captain of the girls' side grabbed the umpire's hat and waved it triumphantly.

After that there was a tug-of-war between the married men and the single men. While the younger men might have been more athletic and muscular, their married opponents had it all over them when it came to weight. Porter Campbell, a really stout heavily built man was their anchor, and did so well, that all the years afterwards when the picnic

was held, he was given this important position. When the tug-o'-war began all the girls cheered the unmarried men while the wives shouted encouragement to their partners. It was an exciting contest but the outcome was not really in doubt.

When things quieted down a bit, someone suggested a climb up a nearby hill. Quite a few started off but when wild strawberries were discovered in thick patches near the foot of the hill, most climbers stopped to pick the small delicious berries, so welcome to fruit-starved homesteaders. Chaddy and I and some of the other girls had a feast of the berries and then kept on up the hill. In spite of the scratching brush and the hot sun, we reached the top. It was much cooler here for a strong breeze blew across the hills. We sat down on a rock and looked about. Nanton lay a little group of specks on the distant prairie. Below us we could see the tree-tops in the coulee, and on the picnic grounds the women-folk starting to get the supper ready.

We were tired and sunburnt and hungry again, so we hurried down the hill to have some supper with the others. From the coulee bank came the sound of someone playing the guitar and singing cowboy ballads. The music seemed to fit perfectly into the setting.

The wagons and buggies soon began to leave for home, ours among them. As the horses jogged along the trail through the warm summer dusk, we were quieter than on our way up for we had had a long, active day and we were tired. But it had been a happy day with good food, good fun and good friends. We decided that while homesteaders might have plenty of hard work, they had lots of good times too.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

WE HARVEST OUR FIRST WHEAT

Aside from the few highlights I have mentioned, such as the lawn social, the picnic to the hills and the celebration in Nanton, most of our days were uneventful enough. There was plenty of work for everyone but no one was overworked. The men worked at breaking more land, disking and harrowing it ready for seeding with fall wheat. The breaking plough they used was called a "sulky" plough, because instead of the ploughman walking behind and holding the handles of the plough, he sat on a shaped metal seat attached to the plough on an axle with two wheels. While this beat walking, it was really a tough job. The driver had to guide the four horses and at the same time work the levers which lowered the shares to the right depth and raised them at the end of the field or to avoid rocks. As ours was a stony farm the plough often hit an unsuspected stone below the surface, so that there was a lot of rough jolting.

It was hard work for the horses too, especially when there hadn't been rain for a while and the ground was dry. Today with all our modern mechanization people should not forget the part horses played in developing the west. Up and down they went, pulling the heavy plough through the tough sod, then breaking the furrows up with the disk and dragging the harrows and the seed-drill over the soil afterwards. The hot sun beat down on them, the wind blew dust in their eyes, their collars made sores on their shoulders, they were tormented by flies and mosquitoes. Too often added to this was the whip of impatient drivers and a scantiness of feed and care.

As I have said, Father was good to his horses. He worked them hard, but he and Jim curried and brushed them down each day and he fed them as well as he could afford and always had a friendly clap and a cheerful word for them. Like most homesteaders, he protected their noses from the

nose-flies that nearly drove them into a frenzy, by attaching fringed pieces of gunny sacking to the lower part of their bridles. When these pests were bad you would see the poor horses bobbing their heads up and down as they worked, so that the fringe of their nose veils shooed off the flies to a certain extent. In the season of flying ants and mosquitoes the men themselves wore veils of mosquito netting around their hats.

Meanwhile Chaddy's and my chores had increased when Fanny Fern and Lassie became the proud mothers of two little red heifer calves that we named Rose and Poppy. While the cows were in the pasture we had to tether the calves out by themselves near the buildings so that they couldn't help themselves to free meals from their mothers. Rose developed a bad habit of sucking and chewing her rope till it was worn thin. Then she would take a run to the end of the rope and kick up her heels. If the chewing had weakened the rope enough, it would break and away Rose would go over the prairie. We got pretty tired of chasing her and even tried rubbing mustard on the rope, but she seemed to smack her lips over it. We decided she must be part goat.

Poppy had a little trick of her own too. When Chaddy would be fastening her rope to the stake, she would run around in a circle, pulling the rope tightly around Chaddy's ankles, and so tripping her up quite neatly. I always had to go and hold the calf till Chaddy got out of her reach. One day Poppy found what it was like to be overturned. She was tied in the stable near Roany and when the cows were being turned out, Roany lowered her head and without any warning gave Poppy such a bunt that she landed in the low manger on her back. Chaddy and I shrieked and began tugging at Poppy's legs that stuck straight up, but she was too firmly wedged for us to budge her. When Father and Jim got there, Poppy's eyes were rolling with fear and she was grunting with discomfort. They soon got her out and she was none the worse.

As our first ten acres of spring wheat began to turn a pale gold, a new type of visitor appeared on the farm — the

implement agent wanting to sell us a binder. Father knew he would have to have a binder but the price seemed out of reach. Like most homesteaders, he had to buy "on time" so that a high rate of interest was added to the cost. Father enjoyed playing one implement dealer against another to get the best possible price, for he was shrewd and liked to bargain. Most of the men would come in and have dinner with us and I remember one dealer taking a crack at a rival company's binder by saying it was like cheese, sometimes it bound and sometimes it didn't.

Our little field of wheat was a very tiny patch of gold on the wide brown prairie, but it was our first and we thought it was pretty wonderful.

The new binder was finally bought and assembled by Father as he was good at machinery. In a short time it was whirring over the ground where for centuries Indians and buffalo had roamed at will. Father drove, Jim did the stooking and we two kids followed along in great excitement, throwing the first sheaves out of the way of the binder, and feeling that we too had a hand in this harvest. Hadn't we picked stones and poisoned the gophers?

Father sent me down to borrow an extra horse from Louis Roy, who put me on old Whitey who was so old and slow that my feet kept beating a tattoo on his ribs to make him move, for I didn't want to miss all the excitement. But Whitey ambled along at his own gait, switching his tail in a lackadaisical way as he went, till I was afraid the grain would all be cut before I got there.

All too soon to suit any of us the binder had finished its work on our small crop and Jim had the stooks all set up like yellow bouquets all over the field. Old Roany looked longingly at them but she hadn't been able to figure out the last patent fastener Jim had rigged up for the gate, though she worked on it patiently with her nose when she thought no one was watching her.

When the sheaves were dry, Father decided to stack them, as he did not know how long it would be before he could get an outfit to thresh them, and being used to the big barns in Ontario, he did not like to leave this precious

grain exposed to all weather in the field. Eventually he located a horsepower outfit owned by a man named Sykes east of Stavely whom he got to come and do our little job.

It would have seemed a very small affair to us in later years when we got used to the steam engines and the big separators, the bundle wagons and the grain tanks, but this first threshing was a big day for us all. The whole family got up very early because Father and Jim had to get everything in shape at the stable. Chaddy and I had to get the cows in early, have them milked and get them out of the way. Mother and Bee had the big job of cooking and baking for the threshers and assisting neighbors who would be there for dinner and perhaps supper, as there was no cook-car attached to such a small outfit.

We were all thrilled when the threshing actually began, but I think Father was the most thrilled of all when he saw the grain running from the separator, the first fruits of this homestead venture of his. He would let the grain run out into his hand and admire the color and size of the kernels. He was eager to find out how many bushels to the acre it went. It really turned out very well, but I can't remember how much—only that Father was pleased and told Mother what a great wheat country it would be.

That night the harvest moon shone down on our straw-stack which looked so inviting that Chaddy and I could not resist climbing it. It was great fun clambering up, slipping back every little way and half smothering in the straw. We laughed and shouted and Buckles joined in the fun, bounding up ahead of us. Even Laddie the cat picked his way cautiously behind us, but would stop and howl anxiously at this strange new game.

When we reached the top we lay flat on our backs and gazed up at the moon till we discovered all sorts of strange things on it—but no rockets. Our childhood was free of that fear. Chaddy thought she saw a bent old man digging potatoes, but this was probably because we had been busy recently digging ours. Then we remembered a little poem in one of our readers and began chanting it together:

“Lady Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving?”

“Over the sea.”

“Lady Moon, Lady Moon, whom are you loving?”

“All that love me.”

Buckles and Laddie had got bored with our stillness and started a fight which ended by Laddie tumbling to the bottom of the stack with Buckles in hot pursuit.

As we followed them down, we heard a soft brushing sound and saw a shaggy roan head nosing into the straw.

“Old Roany is happy at last,” I said.

Next day one of Mother’s first jobs was to have us help her carry out all our bed ticks and empty out the prairie hay with which they had been filled ever since we arrived. It had got pretty well flattened out and lifeless, and Mother could hardly wait to get rid of it with its spear-grasses, and fill the ticks with the fresh wheat straw. Chaddy and I thought this job was mere play, and we tried to see how full we could stuff them. Mother said to put plenty, as they would flatten down later. When we carried them in and put them back on the beds, they were so high we thought we would almost need a little ladder to climb onto them. At the back they were right up to the sloping roof. On top of the straw tick was a thinner tick filled with feathers, for there were no spring-filled mattresses in those days. To make a bed like this was a real art.

When we went to bed that night there was much laughing and calling back and forth. “Don’t fall out of bed,” we warned each other, and we all kept pretty well to the centre. But as we fell asleep so soon and hardly stirred till morning, there were no accidents to report.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

OUR TWO BIG SISTERS ARRIVE FROM ONTARIO

After harvest the next great excitement was the arrival of our eldest sister Winnie from Galt. As I have already explained, she and Ethel had stayed on there a year after we left, boarding with our Aunt Mary and Uncle Jim Booty and keeping on with their jobs, but now they both decided to come out west too. Winnie had always wanted to train as a nurse but Father never approved of it. Like many others at that time, he thought nursing was not quite a respectable occupation for young girls. They would have to nurse men, all kinds of men!

However Winnie had gone ahead and sent in her application to the Calgary General Hospital and been accepted, so her time with us on the homestead would be just a short holiday before starting her training. She would then have two months as a probationer before being finally accepted for the training, and she had to provide her own uniforms for this probationary period.

Full directions were given by the hospital, and Mother, who was a good seamstress, went ahead and made the dresses and aprons for her. The uniforms were of light blue chambray with long sleeves, high necks and very full skirts almost to the floor as were the aprons too. We thought Winnie looked beautiful in them, and Chaddy decided she would be a nurse too, and so she did.

Winnie had red hair which she wore in a "figure eight" low down on her neck and a pompadour at the front. Around her face it went into little soft natural curls, and her clear white skin made a pretty contrast. She had good features and rather large blue eyes, and to us she looked very smart and glamorous in her city clothes, like one of the Gibson Girls in the old Munsey magazines we had been poring over. The costume I remember best was a sort of autumn-brown wool suit with a hat to match. The hat had a rather wide brim

at the front that curved up so as not to interfere with her pompadour. Around the front of the low crown were four or five little birds with touches of green and yellow on the brown. They were not real birds stuffed (we would have disapproved of that) but were made up of feathers to look very natural, with their heads, complete with bright eyes and little yellow beaks, uplifted around the crown as if about to burst into song. Their very naturalness was their undoing, for one unlucky day when Winnie had left the hat in the sitting-room, Laddie the cat pounced on it and before anyone noticed, he had savagely chewed the head off one of the birds and left feathers and beak scattered on the floor.

It was a tragic situation for Winnie. There was no milliner nearer than Calgary to repair the damage and the one decapitated bird completely ruined the whole effect of the hat in which she had planned to make an effective entrance into her new life. Strangely, I cannot remember what was done to save the situation but I rather think that Mother gathered the fragments together and did a temporary repair job to save the day. I was busy rescuing the cat from his just retribution.

Another thing I remember about Winnie's arrival was that she brought with her a can of violet powder which she used on her face. Strictly speaking it was only talcum powder but we had never seen any before and certainly never used any on the face. The modern powder puff was not known to us although I believe fashionable ladies used a swansdown puff to apply their powder. Winnie had a small piece of chamois skin on which she would sprinkle a little powder and then go over her face with it, especially her nose, to take the shine off. To us it was the extreme in sopihistication and elegance, but then Winnie was always a little daring!

One more thing about her brief stay with us comes back to me across the years. She brought with her the current popular song-hit, "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree." Though as I have explained we did not have an "instrument," Winnie sang it for us unaccompanied and then I learned it on the zither. We felt rather smug to be the first in this prairie

community to have the very latest song from the eastern cities, but secretly I think we all thought it was pretty silly stuff. I remember the refrain ended:

"With a heart that is true
I'll be waiting for you
In the shade of the old apple tree."

She got tired of waiting and died before he came back to her, but true to her promise she asked them to bury her in the shade of the old apple tree, so that she would still be waiting for him there. Today when we feel very superior about the songs on the hit-parade, we should remember some of these popular gems of our youth and not be too harshly critical.

I don't think Winnie was terribly enamoured with the crudities and lack of conveniences in our homestead life, and was rather glad to get to Calgary and start on her new training.

Ethel arrived on the 15th of October, when the weather had already turned bitterly cold, quite a shock to us after the mildness of our first winter in the country. Our cousin Will Oliver came with Ethel from Carberry, Manitoba, where she had stopped over a month with Aunt Jane and her family. Jim met them at Nanton with Buckskin and Queen and the lumber wagon.

It was dark when the train came in and it was ten degrees below zero. Will Stirling, the Nanton postmaster's assistant, happened to be at the station, and seeing that Ethel wasn't very warmly clad for the long drive home, he offered to lend her his fur coat. She, however, having just got off the stuffy train, felt warm and cozy and declined his kindly offer, not realizing the ordeal she would have to face. She has often recalled since, that as they drove along mile after mile over the cold prairie, her short legs dangling from the spring-seat of the wagon and the biting wind stinging her flesh, she wouldn't have believed anyone could ever get so cold.

When they came to the railway track about a mile and a half west of our place, Jim, trying to cheer and encourage

her said, "Now we are on the home stretch," but Ethel said it seemed a long home stretch to her.

I remember how cold she was when she finally arrived and how we got her up to the kitchen stove and rubbed her feet and hands. All the while Will Oliver was making cracks about Alberta weather and asking what had happened to our much-boasted-of Chinooks.

Ethel had brought us all presents, and Chaddy and I were greatly pleased with ours, materials for a new dress each. Mine was a blue plaid wool in the Graham tartan, and Chaddy's was fine navy blue serge which Ethel stipulated was to be made in the sailor-suit style. We hadn't had any new clothes since we came west and what we had were getting too small for us and rather shabby, even though we always had to change them when we came home from church or a visit and keep them for "good." All through our childhood Ethel had been very generous to us, buying us slippers, new hats and other pretty clothes for which we yearned but which Mother, with her slender resources, could not afford. Fortunately Mother was a clever dressmaker, and she would rip and make over the clothes of our older sisters for us, adding a touch of velvet or braid for trimming, but of course it wasn't the same as a brand new dress.

Ethel joined forces with Bee and Mame Linton and started in to have a good time at neighborhood parties and dances. She was a gayer person than Bee, witty and entertaining. Bee was a better dancer and had a sweet contralto voice but she was more quiet and reserved than Ethel, and her wit tended to be more dry and caustic.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

JIM GETS A HOMESTEAD OF HIS OWN

Anyone who filed on a homestead in Western Canada had certain requirements to fulfill before he could "prove up" at the end of three years and get his patent. These included putting up buildings and breaking and fencing so many acres of land, while he himself had to live on the homestead at least six months of every year. If he didn't live up to these conditions, anyone could contest his claim to the homestead. As I remember it, the man would be notified and given a period of grace, but if he still failed to live up to the requirements his claim would be cancelled and the first man who had contested it would be allowed to file on the homestead.

As land began to get scarce, settlers began to watch very closely the quarter sections lacking improvements or with absentee owners. There was a quarter three miles south of us which Father had had his eye on for some time as a homestead for Jim who was eighteen, the required age, in March 1905. It was a beautiful quarter with no ridge such as ours had and very few stones and no alkali places. Whoever had filed on it had not put in an appearance up till now nor made any improvements on the land.

Finally Jim wrote to the Land Office (or to Ottawa, I forget which) and contested the present holder's claim on the grounds that he had not fulfilled any of the requirements. In due time he received a letter from Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, stating that he was the first to contest the claim and instructing him to go up to Calgary and file on it. Jim went up to the Land Office but was told there was someone ahead of him, so he came back home again, a very downhearted boy. Father felt pretty sick about it too and didn't sleep much that night. Through our carpet partition we could hear him and Mother talking it over, but he was not easily downed, especially when 160 acres of

fertile land were at stake. Next morning he got up early and took the train for Calgary.

The Land Office was a busy place in those days. Often people would camp in line for days outside the door to be there to get first choice of homesteads if a new tract of land was being opened up. Father made his way to the desk through the crowd, armed with the letter from Hon. Frank Oliver, and asked for the head man in the office, after which he proceeded to talk turkey to him. It ended by an embarrassed clerk admitting he had "made a mistake" when he told Jim there was someone ahead of him, though he was probably trying to get the quarter for a relative or a friend. An application form was made out in Jim's name and Father was told that Jim could take it into Nanton and file on the homestead there. This he didn't lose any time in doing.

According to homestead regulations, a son was allowed to live at home with his parents, provided he fulfilled the other requirements on his homestead. Father didn't want Jim to run any chance of having his claim jumped, so next spring they began to break land on the new quarter. It was quite a distance to go back and forth every day with the team, so they got a tent and put it up as living quarters. I think the women of the family took turns staying there and cooking for Jim. I know Chaddy and I came in for our turn in that summer of 1906. It wasn't a very big tent — just room for our bedding to be unrolled on the prairie sod at night. In the morning Chaddy and I spread the blankets and quilts out to air in the sun and then rolled them up again for the next night. We could sit on these rolls during the day or on wooden boxes. A bigger box near the doorway was our table, and our provisions and dishes were kept in a makeshift cupboard made from other boxes. We cooked on a little camp stove just outside the tent door-flap, and as the cooking all had to be done on the top of the stove we needed only a tea-kettle, a frying-pan and a couple of pots to cook porridge, potatoes and such essentials. Mother and our sisters sent down any baking we needed such as bread and pies from home.

Jim was always an early riser and a hard worker, and

he liked to be out in the field early. He would get up ahead of us, start the wood fire and put the kettle on. Then he would go out and bring in the horses which had been tethered out on the grass through the night as there was still no stable and no fence. He would water them, give them some oats and put their harness on.

Meanwhile Chaddy and I would get up and hurry into our clothes. Our toilette did not take long, for the bathroom facilities consisted of the great outdoors and a granite wash-basin on a bench outside the tent. There was no well and what water we had was hauled in barrels from the home spring.

Neither of us had had any experience in making porridge, but I tackled it as I was the elder of the two. I had instructions from Mother and tried to keep it from being lumpy or from burning. The latter was a double calamity as it spoiled the flavor and made the pot hard to wash, so we took turns in stirring it.

Breakfast was a hearty meal for farmers as they had such long hours in the field, so we usually cooked bacon. We very rarely had toast for breakfast even at home. Toast was for sick people. But we often had fried potatoes, and Mother's home-made bread generously spread with the good butter she made would have been hard to beat. I think I have already mentioned the jam we bought in those days in little wooden buckets which we believed was made chiefly from turnips with some coloring, flavoring and a few seeds added, but we were hungry and not too critical and it still tasted good to us. Whatever else our tent meals consisted of, we always ended with slices of bread thickly spread with this jam. It seemed to have a strange fascination for us.

After Jim had gone out to the field we did our few dishes, rolled up the bedding and then there was nothing else to do till noon when it was time to get Jim's dinner.

There wasn't a particle of shade in all the prairie for miles around us, and as the summer sun rose high in the sky, it beat down on our defenceless tent with a burning heat. We always fastened up the lower part of the sides and turned back the front flaps, and this let the air circulate

through it and took away the sultry, smothery feeling. We had brought the two black parasols along and sometimes sat under them outside the tent for a change.

We had brought plenty of magazines and books and spent a lot of our time reading. This would grow wearisome after a while and we would get out our sewing. Chaddy had brought some patches of the quilt she was making under Mrs. Linton's supervision and would work at this, making tiny, neat stitches. Mrs. Linton had never bothered to teach me to sew, but I too had started to piece a quilt. It was of the variety called a "crazy quilt." Jim used to say, "Crazy quilts for crazy people," when he saw me working on it, and certainly its appearance did not indicate an orderly mind. One started with a piece of cotton about half a yard square and on this basted pieces of material of all sizes and shapes and colors so that they somehow fitted together. Then one did feather-stitching with imitation silk thread around all these irregular patches so as to hide and finish the seams. Many of the pieces were from ends of old neckties and there was also a generous sprinkling of bright-colored velvets and silks, especially red and pink which I, being red-headed could not wear and was therefore very fond of. The finished effect was rather startling.

I was not as neat a sewer as Chaddy, and holding my work on my lap I tended to pucker the pieces and the cotton base with the result that the block was never quite as big when I ended as when I started. Then when I cut out a new block I did not measure it according to the original size, but simply copied it from the one I had just finished, so that my blocks grew progressively smaller and did not fit very well when I sewed them together. It was not an artistic creation but it was bright cheerful work and served its purpose by helping me pass the long hot hours happily.

The gophers, attracted by the smell of food, got very cheeky and would run through the tent almost across our feet. When I got too exasperated at them I would throw my spool of thread at them. It relieved my feelings even though I never hit them.

In spite of the fact that we had so little to do, we always

found it hard to have Jim's meals ready on time for him. We weren't as good at building the fire as Jim was, and it always took a long while to get it going. We didn't get the potatoes peeled in time, and the kettle always seemed to take a long time to boil. One day I was hurrying with the meal and I called to Chaddy "Isn't that kettle boiling yet?"

Chaddy said "I'll see," and she took the lid off and stuck her finger into the water to see if it was boiling. Jim and I kept this up on her for a long time.

I don't know how long we kept house in the tent for Jim but I know it seemed a long time to us. The hot days seemed to go on and on, merging into one another with a sameness that was almost unreal, like a prairie Lotus Land. The evenings were better because our district was near enough the foothills to have a high altitude which brought coolness at sunset no matter how hot the day had been. Besides, Jim would sit with us outside the tent and he was always good company. Sometimes a neighbor would ride by and stop for a little visit with us. We got acquainted at this time with Jo and Jack Hagerman who had got a place south-west of Jim's across the C.P.R. track which cut through a corner of Jim's homestead. Later on the rest of the Hagerman family came out from Ontario and settled and have been among our best friends ever since.

As we got up so early we were always ready for bed before the long Alberta twilight ended, and saturated with fresh air and sunshine we would be off to sleep almost as soon as we rolled in, and never waken till morning.

One night, however, Chaddy and I were wakened by a great howling of coyotes. They always sounded as if there were great numbers of them and as if they were very near, and somehow the canvas of the tent did not seem like much protection for us. We lay there tense and shivering, clasping each other's hands. Jim hadn't wakened but his regular breathing on the other side of the tent was a comforting sound to us.

The howling finally stopped but after a while we began to feel that the animals were coming closer and closer to the tent. Then in the dark stillness we were sure we could hear

them sniffing under the side of the tent right beside our bed. This was too much for us and we called to Jim in a sort of hoarse whisper, "Jim, the coyotes are sniffing around the tent."

Jim was startled at being wakened so suddenly and then he laughed at us and called us silly girls. To satisfy us he got up and walked around the outside of the tent, and then came in and told us there was "nary a coyote in sight." We weren't convinced, but we finally fell asleep and the next thing we knew Jim was calling us that it was time to get up.

The day seemed to drag on more slowly than all the long days before it. We hated to face the prospect of another night in the tent, for in spite of Jim's ridicule we were both quite sure we had heard coyotes sniffing around the night before. After Jim had gone back to the field in the afternoon and we had done the dishes, we talked things over and decided we had had enough. We couldn't just walk out and leave the place unattended so we drew lots with two match sticks. Whoever got the longer one would walk home to tell Mother we didn't want to stay in the tent any longer and get her to send Ethel or Bee in our place. Chaddy drew the long piece and it shows our state of mind that we both thought her the lucky one to be walking the three miles home under the blazing afternoon sun.

I watched her as she trudged along the trail toward home, growing smaller in the distance till she disappeared when the trail dipped below a little rise. I couldn't settle to read or work at my crazy quilt, so I went for a little walk, not going too close to where Jim was working for fear he might ask me where Chaddy was.

He found out, of course, when he came in for supper, but he seemed quite cheerful about it all. After supper Father brought Ethel down to take over and Jim certainly gained by the exchange, for Ethel was, like him, an early riser, a good cook and much better company than we had been. She never heard any coyotes sniffing around the tent. Her only midnight adventure was a terrible thunder storm with wild lightning and such a heavy downpour of rain that

it came through the tent and she and Jim had to put up the two umbrellas we had left behind and take shelter under them till the storm ended.

Meanwhile John Wilson, Norval's younger brother, had his eye on the quarter north of Jim's, as the owner had not resided on it or made any improvements. John made a trip to Calgary to contest the claim, and it happened that Hume Linton went up on the same train for the same purpose. As they sat together chatting, Hume told John why he was going up. John, taken aback and frightened of losing his chance, said nothing to Hume about his intentions. When they got to Calgary, John made a bee-line to the Land Office. Hume was more leisurely and when he arrived later he found that John had already filed on the homestead. Hume thought it was an unfair advantage to take, but John, who had fallen in love with Ethel, felt that the homestead was vital to his future if he was to have a home and means of livelihood to offer her. There was too much at stake to risk an exchange of confidences with Hume.

John put up a shack and for a while Jim batched with him in it. Then our cousin Dave Oliver came out from Manitoba to visit us and he helped our men put up a small house on Jim's place. It was quite well built and had one all-purpose room downstairs and a bedroom up above, though it was so low that the average person could stand up only in the centre part. If you even sat up in bed you would bump your head on the roof.

Jim's homestead helped him to finance a medical course at the University of Toronto and to become established as a doctor. For some strange reason, perhaps because he had had an unsatisfied yearning to be a doctor himself, Father always destined Jim for the medical profession. It was strange because Jim was his only son and Father needed him on the farm where he had proved a wonderful help. However, Jim decided to do as Father wished, and he began to get out his high school texts and study again, as he still needed another year to complete his matriculation for Ontario. He would copy out poems and other things he had to memorize and take them with him on the plough, learning

them as he went up and down the long furrows. Mother helped him with his algebra and German and other subjects. He wrote his final examinations at Western Canada College in Calgary in June 1908 and passed, so that fall he left for Toronto and the homestead knew him only in the summer holidays and finally not at all.

Eventually he sold it to John Wilson who incorporated this fine quarter into his own farm. John, though he started with nothing but his homestead and a willingness to work, became a prosperous and highly respected farmer. and of course he did marry Ethel.

Chapter Thirty

OUR COMMUNITY GETS A SCHOOL

In March 1906 an event of great importance in the lives of Chaddy and me took place. A school was finally built and opened and Chaddy and I became pupils again after a lapse of almost two years.

In order to get a school in a district there had to be a petition signed by a certain proportion of the settlers and a statement that there were the requisite number of children to attend. Many of the settlers in our district were bachelors and most of them were opposed to building a school because of the additional taxes it would mean. "Why should we pay taxes for a school?" they asked. "We haven't any kids."

But those with children were just as determined to get a school, and it was only a matter of time till enough children arrived to make up the required number. I remember the day a homesteader named Mr. Widdis came around with a petition for Father to sign.

In due time a school district very suitably called "Rolling Plains" was formed and a schoolhouse built in it. Unfortunately for us it was on the opposite side of Mosquito Creek from us and there was no bridge within reasonable distance for us to cross the creek and so attend the school. However at just about the same time, the Porcupine School District was formed south-west of us, and while we had no property within it, under the circumstances Father was given permission for us to go there. Porcupine S.D. took its name from the Porcupine Hills to the west of it.

Chaddy and I were certainly excited that first day, after our long holiday. We had not entered a schoolroom from the end of June 1904 till now, almost two years later. Porcupine School was a little over three miles from home going by trails that cut across the prairie. It would have been nearly a mile further by road allowance. The first day Father drove

us, as we were loaded with our Ontario school books and our lunch pails.

Porcupine was a typical one-room country schoolhouse, a frame building with the gable facing the road, a little entrance porch at the front flanked by two windows, while windows ran all along the south wall of the school. Out behind were two small but necessary buildings labelled "Girls" and Boys."

Inside the school was a cloakroom right across the front, used by both girls and boys, with shelves at both ends for the water pail and the children's dinner "buckets" as the children called them. The partition between the cloakroom and the main schoolroom stopped a few feet from the ceiling and it was the delight of the boys to crawl along this partition and then shin up a support that ran up to the square opening into the attic. It was easy to push up the cover of this and crawl in and prowl around in the dark attic, that is, if the teacher wasn't around. The walls were not plastered but were finished with narrow boards which had been stained and varnished. There was one blackboard at the front, a case of wall maps on the side wall, the teacher's desk and arm-chair at the front of the room and rows of double desks for the pupils. A typical pot-bellied stove stood in the centre of the room to supply heat for the whole school.

Our first teacher was a rosy-cheeked girl, Miss Claire Hunt from Calgary. She boarded with the Broomfields south of the school a few miles, and she had brought her own pony, a pretty black one with clipped mane and top-knot, quite unlike the usual farm ponies. She called her, very suitably, "Black Beauty" and she rode side-saddle, a style that seemed very genteel and strange to most of the students, although the Broomfield girls at first rode that way, and so did Mrs. Til Fisher who, as I mentioned earlier, could take her part in the round-up with the men.

Many of the children rode horseback to school, often two or even three on one horse. There was a shed-roofed stable to keep the horses in. After the special concession of a drive for us the first day, Chaddy and I knew we would

have to walk most of the time, as Dixie was too lively to carry both of us.

Even with the drive we were almost late the first morning. A boy quite a bit younger than us greeted us at the door. "Hurry up," he said, "You're the last couple here." He was Henry Eld, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Gust Eld who lived a half mile south of the school. There were quite a few Elds in the district, all related. They were Swedish-Americans who had come up from "the States" to get homesteads in Alberta.

Later by way of making conversation Chaddy asked Henry if he had any brothers or sisters.

"Three, counting myself," he answered.

Miss Hunt had a hard job ahead of her to sort the students into classes, for not only had they come from a variety of provinces and states of the Union, but many, like us, had been out of school quite a while and more or less running wild. The Broomfields had been going to the Stavely School where Annie was in Standard V. After questioning me, Miss Hunt decided to put me in with her, so that we two were the highest class in the school.

At that time in Alberta, classes were not known as "grades" but as "standards," which ran as high as Standard V in the public schools and to Standard VIII in the high schools, the latter being the equivalent of Grade XII now or senior matriculation. Standard V was the entrance to high school, but was often called "fifth class leaving" because many students then did not have an opportunity to go on any further. There were no high schools near them, and perhaps anyway they could not be spared from the farm to go away to school. In Ontario the high school entrance examination was senior IV but in Alberta Standard V gave the students a chance to take more advanced work and some high school subjects such as algebra and geometry. Chaddy found herself in the Junior 3rd standard.

The second morning Chaddy and I set off on foot with our books in the leather school-bags we had brought from Galt, and our dinners in tin lard pails. They felt pretty heavy by the time we had trudged the three miles to school,

and we had to make a little extra spurt at the last as the teacher came to the door and rang the bell. We were glad to sit down at the double desks we had been assigned to. I sat with Annie in the back seat so that we might share books. My Ontario texts wouldn't do and I had to wait till Father went to Nanton to buy mine. The Ontario readers were used in the other classes and very good readers they were. Jim's had been passed on to me and then to Chaddy and were enlivened by his little drawings in the margins, such as a sketch of Lord Ronald complete with top hat and cane beside Tennyson's poem "Lady Clare." These readers are collectors' items now and I treasure the set I have.

In being placed in Standard V I had missed the whole year in Senior IV and over half of the 5th, but what I had taken with Mother helped a great deal. I had covered the algebra pretty well, and anyway it wasn't required for the departmental examinations. I had to catch up on the literature, history, geography, arithmetic and art, besides the two new subjects of geometry and agriculture. The latter was a sort of simplified botany with application to the farm, and there was a certain amount of animal husbandry all of which I enjoyed. The English composition and grammar were no trouble to me.

Annie was inclined to be rather superior, for she had had a good go at all the subjects from the opening of the fall term till now. Hill's "Lessons in Geometry" was really a bugbear to me whereas Annie was an old hand at it. However, when it came to grammar, I took a back seat to no one. I remember one day Annie and I were working hard at our grammar lesson, and we were allowed to hold a low toned discussion as we worked, because Miss Hunt had so many classes to attend to that she hadn't much time to help us and left us to work away by ourselves.

One of the sentences we had to analyze was "Dust thou art, to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul." I said "Dust thou art, to dust returnest" was a noun clause, subject of the verb phrase "was spoken." Annie said I was quite wrong, though I forget what kind of clause she said it was. I said I was right, and she said my analysis was silly and

ridiculous. We began to grow quite heated and finally Miss Hunt noticed and came down to ask us what was the matter. We each hastened to give our side of the question. Miss Hunt was young and very earnest, but she was rather flustered, and after looking over the sentence she said Annie was right.

I felt quite outraged and thought she had made the decision because she boarded with the Broomfields and did not want to offend them. Annie was quite triumphant but I was not convinced. When I got home I appealed to Mother and my two elder sisters and they all agreed it was a noun clause, but advised me not to say any more about it at school.

Next day Miss Hunt came down to our desk and said "I was mistaken. It is a noun clause."

I thought it was very generous of her to own up to a student, and hope I didn't look too smug about it. One cannot imagine students arguing about a grammatical point today, for grammar has toppled from its place on the curriculum and is no longer a matter of much interest.

Annie and I were never at a loss for an argument, which always added a little interest to life. One day we were sitting out on the shady side of the school eating our lunch when Annie said rather grandly, "I'm going to go to high school and normal school and get to be a teacher. Then I'll save my money and take a trip around the world."

"That would be wasteful," I said with a self-righteous air. "Just think of all the poor people who are starving and yet you would spend all that money on a trip."

"Well, it wouldn't be wasting it," Annie said. "I could write all kinds of geography and travel books when I got back and pay my expenses."

"You'd better get busy and learn what is in the geography now before examination time," I retorted meanly, brushing the crumbs of my lunch from my lap.

"You're wasting good food right now," said Annie.

"I'm not. The birds will eat the crumbs."

"Well, birds can live on worms the way they were intended to do," was Annie's final word on the subject.

When we couldn't think of anything else to argue about

we discussed the rival beauty of John Wilson's and Hume Linton's hair. They both had dark red wavy hair and both were in line to become our respective brothers-in-law.

Chaddy and I very often found it hard to get to school on time. Annie had a pony and was never late, and when Chaddy and I arrived after school had started, she would chant softly in a low monotone to me as I took my seat—

“Tardy scholar is your name. Tardy scholar is your name.

Always sleeping till the clock strikes eight.

Slowly creeping to the school-yard gate.”

It was a long walk for us and if there were wild prairie cattle in the open section between the railway crossing and the school, we would have to walk down the railway track the mile to the fence of Mr. Eld Senior and then follow it the rest of the way, which was a much longer route than angling across the section. We had been told never to walk through a bunch of wild cattle as they were not used to seeing people on foot, and we had heard of different people who had been chased by them.

One never-to-be-forgotten morning this happened to us. We saw quite a few cattle on the open range but they were grazing quietly, and as we hadn't much time to spare, we decided to take the risk and cut across. All went well till we were perhaps three quarters of the way there when some of the cattle began to raise their heads and stare at us, and come a few steps toward us, probably out of sheer curiosity. The cattle behind them started raising their heads too, and we could hear their horns clicking together as they pressed against each other. The ones behind began pushing against those ahead till the whole bunch moved toward us.

I had my books in my old-fashioned school-bag with a long strap to go over my shoulder. I began waving this round and round in a circle over my head, running toward the cattle in what I hoped was an imitation of a cowboy's cantering, all the while yelling the way we had heard the cowboys do. Chaddy followed my example, but I told her to make for Eld's fence between our lunges at the cattle. They would stop and stare at us and then come on again. At last Chaddy made the fence and rolled under regardless of barbed-wire

tears to her clothing. I made a final dash at the cattle letting out such blood-curdling yells that they must have decided I was too dangerous to face, for they finally did a right-about-face and ran. I ran too, the other way, and followed Chaddy under the fence where we lay on the grass till we got our breath back. We decided we would do as Father said in future and walk down the railroad track no matter how late it made us.

Hugh Hawk rode a white pony called Biddy, and sometimes he would ride to meet us. He would then dismount and say, "I'll carry your book sack," or "I'll carry your dinner bucket." I was surprised to realize that I was the object of these attentions. He would pass me notes in school hours, or those little lonzenge candies with messages on them such as "Will you be my girl?" This was all a novelty to me and I rather liked it till one day he passed me a rather bulky note which contained a live grasshopper. I was so startled that I spasmodically threw it back, and Miss Hunt saw me and told me to bring the note to her. This sort of broke up the affair.

Hugh distributed his favors impartially as time went on. He used to call on Pearl Voisey at their homestead down on Mosquito Creek, and Jake, her father, would call to the boys, "Get your gun. Here comes the hawk after the chicken." Later he used to squire Chaddy to dances, but finally fell in love with Annie Broomfield whom he married, but all this was still far in the future.

Meanwhile we kids proceeded with our education in Porcupine School. Miss Hunt took the classes up to the front one at a time and gave them their lessons in reading, arithmetic and other subjects, all the while trying to keep her eye on the children sitting at their double desks studying or doing exercises. The drone of the classes at the front never seemed to distract us, any more than radio and TV do to modern children.

At noon we ate our lunches around the pot-bellied stove if it was cold weather, or out on the grass at the north side of the school if it was hot. Lockers were things unheard of, and as the dinner-pails stood unguarded on the shelf, pilfer-

ing from lunches packed by mothers who were especially good cooks occasionally took place. It was easy to do because it was customary for students to put their hands up and ask to leave the room, so that any of them could dip into another's lunch pail and help himself silently to a choice piece on his way out. This happened to one boy's lunch several times and he told his mother about it.

Instead of reporting it to the teacher and getting someone into trouble, she put up an especially tasty looking sandwich on the top of the lunch, the filling of which was liberally seasoned with red pepper. Evidently the trap worked, for when the children went out for recess, a boy was found sitting outside crying and drinking big gulps of water.

The water for the school was brought from a spring at the edge of a slough in old Mr. Eld's field, and there was great competition among the pupils to be allowed to go after it when the weather was fine, for it meant escape from the classroom for a little while. Usually two of the younger ones would be sent, and though the spring was only a quarter of a mile away, the trip always took quite a long time. There were wild-flowers to be picked, gophers to be chased and snared, while it was pleasant just dawdling in the sunshine a while, or playing in the mud of the slough.

On the way back, they might get jostling each other and some of the water would be spilled. The pail stood on the shelf with a tin dipper in it which everybody used. School health authorities today may hold up their hands in horror at this unsanitary arrangement, but I can't remember any epidemic of an infectious or contagious disease going through the school. Perhaps we immunized ourselves.

We usually hurried through our lunches because there were so many games we wanted to play. If it were a very hot day we often played "minny minny motion" though I am not sure of the spelling. It didn't require too much energy. We chose sides and then one side would go around the corner of the school and decide on a word to act. Then they would go back to the others and advancing hand in hand in a row would chant their challenge and be answered by their opponents in this way:

"Here we come!"

"Where from?"

"New York."

"What's your trade?"

"Lemonade."

"Show us some."

The challengers would then begin to act out the word, each syllable separately and then the whole word as in charades, but no words were spoken. It was all pantomime.

If the others guessed the word correctly, the actors would make a wild dash for their own side of the yard, but any who were caught had to go over to the other side. It was a pleasant game and was a good one to play in a country school where the students were of such assorted ages and sizes.

Another game we played was "anty-I-over" though again I am not sure of the spelling. In it there would be two teams, one on each side of the schoolhouse. The side with the ball would throw it over the school and shout "anty I-over." If one on the other side caught it, they would all run around to the opposite side and the one who caught the ball would tag as many as he could for his side. What made it more exciting was the throwing side never knew if the ball had been caught or not, or which side they would come around. Sometimes they divided and came around both sides to confuse their opponents, and there would be wild shrieks and dashing back and forth to evade the taggers, and this makes me think that perhaps everyone on the side that caught the ball might tag the other side, not just the one, as I stated above.

Then there was "pum-pum-pull-away," a sort of tag game with each side lined up against their goal. The ones who were "It" would shout "Pum-pum-pull-away, If you don't come we'll pull you away." Then those on the opposite side had to run, and you never knew who would single you out to catch you, or whether you would be able to dodge and make it safely to the other goal. The ones caught stayed with the side that caught them.

During class periods everyone worked quite hard, for

little Miss Hunt kept quite good discipline. However, if we got through with our lessons in good time, she would read aloud to us chapter by chapter from some book. I remember especially her reading us "Black Beauty" which I had already read in Ontario but enjoyed hearing again. Miss Hunt also taught us songs which we learned by ear and sang lustily in unison. Our favorite was the "The Birdies' Ball" which I still think is a tuneful song with a nice sense of humour.

Chapter Thirty-One

BIG BUGS AND LITTLE BUGS

Chaddy had the misfortune not long after we started to school to come home with a headful of lice. This was not an uncommon thing in country schools in those days, when some of the children might come from rather careless homes, and in the close proximity of double seats it was easy for pests to pass from one child to another. At night Mother anointed both our heads with coal-oil and combed them with a fine-toothed comb till our scalps were raw, for since I slept with Chaddy, she had generously shared her infestation with me. The coal-oil combing sessions had to be held at regular intervals in case any nits had hatched. A note had to be taken to the teacher, and she moved Chaddy to another seat and probably held private and embarrassing interviews with the mothers of some other children.

Pests of one kind or another were one of the unpleasant sides of homestead life. Prairie itch was very common and would spread through a whole school, not stopping at the teacher or even the school inspector. An ointment made with sulphur and lard destroyed the tiny itch mites but sometimes started a sulphur rash so that the last state of the victim was almost worse than the first.

Very few prairie homes completely escaped at least a brief infestation of bed bugs. It was said they came in the lumber, and whether or not this was so or they were passed along with transient guests, at least they came, and in the dark of the night crawled out of the crevices to bite innocent sleepers. Since the houses were not plastered, the cracks in the wooden walls made ideal hiding places, and made it hard to get rid of them. At the first sign of the loathsome dark flat bugs, Mother would go around all the bed joints and cracks in the walls and floors and apply some sort of poison paste recommended to destroy them. No one ever admitted to having them and waged war against them in silence.

I remember one Sunday our minister, Rev. John Kennedy who was a well-known character in Southern Alberta, forgot to bring his bible to the service so he borrowed one from the home of a prominent member of the congregation. We had a little choir by this time which sat behind the minister. This morning as he was preaching with the bible open on the desk in front of him, we in the choir watched fascinated as a bed bug crawled out from the leather binding of the book and proceeded in a leisurely manner across the printed page. All at once Rev. John looked down and saw it. Without the slightest pause in his oratory, he closed the book and brought his fist down hard two or three times on the cover as if to emphasize the point he was making. It was a masterly display of presence of mind. Nobody ever mentioned the episode to him and nobody knew if he mentioned it to the owner of the bible.

House flies were a great tribulation to the prairie housewife. Cattle, pigs and chickens in the barnyard with the resulting manure made ideal breeding places for flies. If your stable happened to be to the west of the house your plight was worse, as the prevailing west winds brought the pests in swarms to your kitchen. We were lucky in this respect as our house faced west and the barn was to the east of it. Even so we had to fight them all summer long. With the houses rather roughly built, even with screens on doors and windows, the flies would get in through cracks, and they would watch their chance too whenever the doors were opened. Mother used to make what she called "fly switches" by cutting up tough paper bags in strips and fastening these in a big bunch to an old broom handle. After dinner when all the dishes and food were cleared away, we would pull down the blinds and darken the front part of the house, and two of us would wield the switches and chase the flies out into the kitchen. Then Mother would put poison fly-pads around in old dishes. Before supper some one would go out and sweep up the victims. It was a disgusting process but not as bad as the sticky fly-paper that people hung from the ceiling or laid about in sheets around the room, where impaled flies struggled in death throes before your eyes.

Once Mother tried fumigating the kitchen with formaldehyde. It nearly killed us but the flies only got livelier.

At night when the flies had gone to sleep we were troubled at certain times in the summer by hordes of brown moths or "millers" that would come in and fly around the lamps and around our heads. They seemed especially revolting to Chaddy and me and we would make a big fuss about them, but Mother would say, "Just forget about them" or "Don't think about them." One night I was kneeling at my bed in my nightgown and bare feet when an older sister said to me in a low voice, "There's a moth on you." I shrieked and jumped to my feet. Then when I saw her laughing I said angrily, "You're a darned liar," and got down on my knees again and finished my prayer. Mother didn't hear me or she would have had something to say. When we were smaller she used to wash our mouths out with soap and water if we used words she didn't approve of.

Outside the house we were assailed by other insects. Mosquitoes and flying ants made life a misery for man and beast. The mosquitoes would rise in a swarm from the prairie grass and sloughs and the poor horses would have their necks and bodies covered with them, without being able to do much about it if they were working. The men wore veils of mosquito netting around their hats and this protected them from the flying ants too. Their season was shorter but they were very vicious. I remember our Uncle Robert shortly after he came from Ontario having his bushy whiskers completely alive with a mass of flying ants. He soon followed the fashion and got himself a veil of mosquito netting.

I have already referred to the "nose flies" which pestered the horses and stung them in the noses so viciously that if they heard one buzzing near them they would bob their heads up and down in a sort of frenzy. The farmers did protect them from these with nose veils of fringed gunny sacking.

The cattle had heel flies to pester them. You would see a grazing cow suddenly kick its heels up, curl its tail

over its back and start running wildly. From time to time it would stop and lick at its heels and run on again. We didn't know anything about these insects having this terrifying effect on the cattle but later we read up about them in agricultural journals and leaflets. They were called warble flies as well as heel flies and we were told they laid their eggs on the hairs of the cattle's legs and lower parts of their bodies, and it was while this egg laying was going on that they caused such fear in the animals. These eggs hatched in a few days into tiny grubs which penetrated the skin and worked their way through the tissues of the poor beasts' bodies. They remained dormant here till late winter when they migrated again, this time to the skin of the back which they perforated to make breathing holes. Here they developed into tumor-like swellings where they stayed for about two months. Then the grub about three-quarters of an inch long worked its way out of the breathing hole and dropped to the ground where it went into a hard pupa stage. After about six weeks, out hatched another heel fly and the whole miserable process went on again. As I have said, we knew nothing about this cycle at first and did not connect the heel flies with the nasty swellings on the cows' backs, from which we would sometimes see the men squeeze out a grub. We were too inexperienced to do anything about the pest, but since that day much has been learned about eradicating the warble fly which not only made the cattle so miserable but caused them to lose weight and made the hides almost worthless.

There were also insects which attacked the farmers' crops, grasshoppers, cutworms, sawflies and such. Some naturalists have said that if insects are not kept in check there is danger of their taking over the earth, and that they are the only forms of life that would survive nuclear radiation. I know nothing about the truth of this, but I do know that insects did much to add to the worry and discomfort of homesteaders.

Chapter Thirty-Two

OUR FIRST DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS AND MORE ABOUT SCHOOL

With June came Departmental Examinations. Though I was so ill-prepared, Miss Hunt thought I should send in my application to write the Standard V exam. with Annie, so I did.

The papers were sent to Miss Hunt who was to preside, so the government must have trusted her not to give us any hints as to questions and answers, and probably required a declaration by her before a commissioner of oaths that she had not done so. Actually she leaned over backward to be absolutely correct about every detail of the regulations. The examinations were held in the school, all the other children having been dismissed for their summer holidays. I was on the one side of the school and Annie on the other and we waited with beating hearts while Miss Hunt tore open the envelope of each exam as it came up and gave us our copies of the questions. After that the only sounds that could be heard were the scratching of our pens and the ticking of the school clock which suddenly sounded very loud and ominous.

The first day was fun because we had literature and geography and they were easy. One question on the literature paper was to name our favorite poem in the Fifth Reader and give our reasons for liking it. I chose Cowper's poem "On My Mother's Picture," and I thought Annie would choose Bryant's "Thanatopsis" but she made the same choice as I did. We ate our lunch outside and talked things over. To encourage me in the exams Father had allowed me to ride Dixie to school for the first time, and after we finished our lunch, Annie and I rode the horses down to the spring and watered them, she riding her little brown pony Nellie side-saddle, while I rode Dixie astride.

The day we had arithmetic it rained and was very dreary.

The paper was terrible. After it was over and we had turned in our papers Miss Hunt worked all the questions out on the blackboard and we were both sure we had failed, so we went out into the the stable with the horses and cried.

In art we had just an hour and a half to do five questions. I spent so much time on the first one drawing the chalk-box in perspective with some of the crayons sticking up, that I suddenly found I had only ten minutes left to do all the rest. We were asked to do a cover design for a book and in my panic the only cover I could think of was that of my old enemy "Hill's Lessons in Geometry." Fortunately its only ornamentation consisted of little squares arranged in rows across the top which was easy to do. Annie did the cover of "English Orphans" as she remembered it from their books at home. Then in the remaining seconds I drew a coal-oil lamp from memory, and that was it.

The last day of the exams we got through about two o'clock. We saddled our horses and then the loneliest feeling came over us. Annie was to ride south and I north and it seemed as though the end of everything had come. I suppose it was the natural let-down after being so keyed up over the exams. The schoolhouse looked deserted too, standing there in the hot sun with no children around it and no life except the odd gopher scampering about with impunity. We rode slowly off on our separate trails, turning to wave till we were out of sight of each other.

During the summer holidays I tried to forget about the exams as I was afraid I had failed. One August day, however, we saw a horseman coming from the south at a good speed and it turned out to be Annie on Nellie. As she came near she kept waving a paper in her hand and shouting "We passed! We both passed!" The Broomfields lived fairly near Stavely and got their mail oftener than we did. When one of her family brought the paper home from town with the exam results, she was washing her hair, but she simply wrapped a towel around it and came galloping up to share the good news with me. I ran out to meet her and we sat down on the shady side of the house and gloated over seeing our names there "in guid black print" among

the successful students. Remembering the arithmetic and drawing papers however, we felt we must have got through by the skin of our teeth.

Later on we received our Standard V diplomas from Edmonton — imposing looking documents, the first to be issued by the new Department of Education for the new province. They were signed by Alexander Cameron Rutherford, the first provincial Premier, who also held the post of Minister of Education. We have since been told that these diplomas have now great historic interest and that we should treasure them as collectors' items. I should add that for me it has also great personal value. I worked hard to get it.

The question was, what to do now? There was no high school anywhere near, and my family could not afford to send me to Calgary and pay for my board. Under such circumstances public school teachers in country schools were permitted to teach Standard VI, the first year of high school if requested to do so. I do not know if the teacher was paid more for this extra work or not, but it was arranged with Miss Hunt that when the fall term opened, Annie and I would enroll in Standard VI, and our sister Ethel decided to go with us. She had taken part of her high school course in Ontario but had not finished because Father said he could not afford to send her any longer. This was a great pity as Ethel was very clever and loved to study, so now she was delighted to be starting in again, while Bee stayed home and helped Mother.

As the harvest was still on and the horses all in use when school opened again, we continued to walk.

I think Miss Hunt was a little daunted at the thought of teaching three high school students, especially as Ethel was as old as she was, but she was conscientious and did not object.

As she had so many classes, she had to leave us to our own resources quite a bit, especially in such subjects as literature, history and geography which we could read for ourselves and discuss together. This worked very well in some subjects but in literature it led to some heart-burning on my part. Ethel and Annie had a very disrespectful attitude

toward some of the poets, but I loved and revered them very much and could not bear to hear them ridiculed. We were allowed to discuss things quietly in our corner with Ethel as leader, but she was witty and would interpret passages in a facetious way, and Annie would laugh. I remember in Wordsworth's "Yarrow Unvisited" she would explain such lines as "Had trod the banks of Clyde and Tay" by saying "That means they stopped for a cup of 'tay'." "And with the Tweed had travelled" she said meant "they wore tweed travelling suits," and so she would go on. Like Queen Victoria, I was not amused, but when we came to the old Scottish ballad "Fair Helen of Kirkconnell" I really blew up. Ethel and Annie agreed it was the silliest thing they had ever read, and they would repeat the lines in a mocking, jingling way,—

"I wish I were where Helen lies,
Night and day on me she cries.
I wish I were where Helen lies
On fair Kirkconnell lea."

I kept telling them they were missing the whole spirit of the ballad, but they would go jingling on,—

"As I went down the mountain side
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide
On fair Kirkconnell lea,
I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackéd him in pieces sma',
I hackéd him in pieces sma'
For her sake that died for me."

"What a barbarous, brutal thing to do," cried my tormentors. Finally Miss Hunt had to take official notice of their hilarity and my red-faced indignation, and came down and ended the lesson, though I felt sure her sympathy was with them. I had to wait till university days to have my instinctive appreciation of this beautiful old ballad vindicated.

Miss Hunt handed in her resignation at the end of the year as she had been accepted to teach in one of the Calgary schools and so could live at home. Before leaving she put on a bang-up Christmas concert, complete with Christmas tree

and refreshments. In the program not only did every child have a piece to say or a song to sing, but young people over school age were drawn in to the entertainment. One group put on a "dialogue" called "The Census-Taker" in which Bee was a housewife with a dustcap on her head, busily sweeping the floor when the census-taker called. To all his questions she gave very sharp, unhelpful replies. Hughena Broomfield, who later married Hume Linton, had a part and Warwick Linton was the census-taker. It was regarded as a great humorous success.

The part of the affair that fascinated Chaddy and me was the Christmas tree. Someone had gone up to the hills and brought down a tall, bushy spruce that touched the ceiling of the school room. The decorations would seem sparse and plain to a child today. Instead of electric lights there were real candles and when they were lighted the effect was breath-taking. I suppose some adult was standing by with a pail of water but such practical precautions did not intrude to mar the magic of the moment. In the grey stone schools of Presbyterian Galt we had never seen a Christmas tree and we did not have one in our own home. The Elds and others in the Porcupine School District were of Swedish origin and they went all out for Christmas. There was even a Santa Claus, typically fat and jolly, bounding in with his sleigh bells jingling, and shouting his "Ho, ho, ho!"

Miss Hunt had bought a personal gift for every child, and even we older ones felt a great thrill when Santa called our names and patted us on the head, or shook hands. There was also a muslin bag containing an orange, nuts and candies on the tree for each child and these too were distributed by Santa. The pungent smell of the oranges, a rare treat for us all, mingled with the scent of the spruce. It was a truly wonderful night.

The only thing that I remember about refreshments was that someone spilled a cup of coffee on the pant leg of our brand-new brother-in-law's brand-new wedding suit of fine navy-blue serge. This brother-in-law, Billie Magee, was a surprise Winnie had sprung on us. Without any preparation

she had announced to us that she was giving up her training course as a nurse, and giving up the young man back in Galt whom she was considered to be engaged to and was going to be married to someone we had never heard of.

She herself had known him only a short time. His parents lived just a few blocks from the hospital and his mother used to invite the nurses-in-training to come in for a cup of tea in their hours off. They were perennially hungry and enjoyed the snacks she gave them. Billy was a brakesman on the C.P.R. and if he happened to be home he fluttered the hearts of the nurses with his Irish charm and wit. Winnie seemed especially flattered when he singled her out and turned the whole battery on her. When other girls warned her, she thought they were just jealous.

There was gloom on our homestead when the letter with her engagement arrived saying the date of her wedding was set for December 19th. None of us went up for the wedding, for what little cash Father had, he sent up to help with her trousseau. They were married quietly in the study of Rev. John A. Clark, minister of Knox Presbyterian Church in Calgary, and two days later they came down to spend a little while with us on the farm.

We took them to the school Christmas concert, the only entertainment in the neighborhood, and then came the unfortunate incident of the coffee.

"Here's the other leg if you want to spill some down it," said Billie to the embarrassed chap who had spilled the coffee on him. With such a crowd milling around in such close quarters it would have been strange if something hadn't got spilled, but most people would have passed it off good-naturedly, even though the hot coffee did burn his leg and stain his suit. It was our first experience of our new brother-in-law's Irish wit, but we did not let it spoil that carefree Christmas time.

We began our Christmas holidays the next day, but the good people who had brought the tree and decorated it and arranged the whole happy affair, came back the next day and worked even harder cleaning up all the debris in the schoolhouse. Capt. Eversfield was amazed at this. He said

one could usually find people ready to help with a celebration, but once it was over it took a really good scout to come back and do the hard, dirty work of clearing away when all the fun was over.

Chapter Thirty-Three

WE GET A MAN TEACHER AT PORCUPINE

After the holidays we came back to a new teacher, Mr. R. J. Johnston. He was a quite a change from Miss Hunt, a middle-aged man who had taught school for many years in Ontario. He had come west to take up a homestead and decided to take a school in the neighborhood to help pay the expenses of putting up buildings and breaking land. He had chosen our district to settle in because the projected town-site of Parkhill was named after Mr. W. J. Parkhill, the father of Mr. Johnston's first wife, and was being promoted by a group of the Parkhill relatives.

While a young man R. J. Johnston had lost his left arm in an accident in a saw-mill, and that was when he decided to become a teacher. He had a hook that he attached to the stump of the arm for certain types of manual work, but as a rule he simply wore the one sleeve folded back and pinned out of the way. There wasn't much he couldn't do with that one good arm, as we soon found out. He drove a big horse "Charlie" to school in a buggy and he could hitch and unhitch him with the greatest of ease. He was a big heavy-set man but nimble on his feet and when the weather was fine he used to play games with us outside. He would play baseball and often used to give the kids practice in fielding by batting out flies to them. He would hold the bat and the hard baseball with which we played in such a way (I can't remember exactly how) that he could give the ball a flip up into the air and hit it as it came down, and he could really put power into it.

One day in a regular ball game when he and I were fielding, both of us ran from different directions to catch a ball that the batter had sent far afield. We were both looking up as we ran and were so intent on the ball that neither saw the other. I was pretty heavy for my height but he was a lot heavier and we came together so hard that I was not

only knocked down but was knocked out for a brief minute. He was terribly contrite but I was soon on my feet and had my wind back, and of course it was no more his fault than mine.

In the winter months we might get out for a game of fox and geese or a snow fight, but when it was really cold we spent the noon hour and recess times inside. With the old pot-bellied stove going full blast, a roomful of kids milling around, and the smell of food from an assortment of lunch pails mingling with the human smells and that of the heavy winter clothing, there would be a real old fug in the room.

I can't remember any disciplinary problems because everyone had a wholesome respect for Mr. Johnston. Sometimes when the hubbub got too bad he would start one of his own little games. One of them appealed to the small children especially. He would walk around the room with his one hand open behind his back, holding a dime. Anyone who could slip up and get the coin out of his hand could have it. Up and down the aisles he would walk, his open hand temptingly displaying the dime, a lot of money to children then. Behind him would trail a flock of eager children and every once in a while one of them would pounce at the coveted prize. Snap would go his hand shut, though all the while his eyes were looking straight ahead and he had apparently been paying no attention to the little fortune hunters on his track. I don't think anyone ever got it, but it was a favorite indoor sport and had the additional merit of bringing a period of quietness to the noisy place.

Another game he played with us was to hold up a dollar bill briefly and promise that whoever could tell him everything that was on it, might have it. No one ever won that prize either and he didn't try it too often in case we might study up on a bill at home and fool him.

Mr. Johnston's teaching methods wouldn't have pleased the proponents of the modern so-called "progressive" system. He was a rugged individualist and his emphasis was squarely on the three "R's" plus grammar and spelling. He stimulated our interest in the latter by having wonderful spelling

matches on a Friday afternoon which were as hotly contested as the ball games. Arithmetic was his chief love. The young ones were drilled in the multiplication tables till they couldn't have been caught out in their sleep. His pupils had to practise running up long columns in addition at lightning speed and we had daily exercises in mental arithmetic that kept us up on our toes. I don't think any of his students would ever feel the need for an adding machine or a slide rule.

In our high school class he really went all out. He had an old Ontario high school arithmetic book with some real gems. One of these was a type which he called "the flour question." I can't remember how it went but I know it had a way of cropping up in unexpected situations that had nothing to do with flour. Then when we had struggled in vain to find a solution, he would work it out on the board for us, then whirl about and say triumphantly "Your old friend the flour question. Didn't you recognize it?"

The next year when Annie and I went to high school in Calgary, the principal, Mr. J. A. Smith, would sometimes set us some tough problems which no one but Annie and I could solve. He would then ask "Who showed you how to do that?" and we would say "Mr. Johnston." Sometimes in exasperation he would ask, "Who *is* this Mr. Johnston?" Later on Mr. Smith became a school inspector and when he came to inspect Porcupine School where Mr. Johnston taught still, he was so curious about him that he sneaked quietly into the entry and listened, and then into the school without knocking. Chaddy was there and told us later about it and that Mr. Johnston rightly considered it rather unfair.

One of the subjects we had in Standard VI was book-keeping, the old fashioned kind with a day-book, a journal, a ledger and a trial balance. Mr. Johnston was very keen about this because it involved two of his favorite subjects, writing and arithmetic. He said we could get nowhere in half-hour periods three times a week, so when we did our book-keeping we did it all day every school day for two weeks. We kept a set of books and had to turn in a really professional job. Ethel shone at this for she wrote a beautiful

business hand and she was the star pupil at arithmetic and all mathematics. I would start off bravely but would make mistakes and there would be erasing and blots and smudges, rather a sorry mess.

I could never get the trial balance to balance. When we wrote our final exams in bookkeeping the next June, I was determined not to make any silly errors and I worked manfully through the various entries. When it came to the trial balance I worked it out that the firm was in the red and I thought "I must be wrong, for they would never have him lose in an examination paper." There wasn't time to do it over, so I handed it in in a depressed state of mind, only to find later that Ethel had got the same result, so of course I was right, the only set I had done correctly the whole year.

Physics, or physical science, was a subject we had quite a bit of trouble with, as we had no equipment for the experiments, not even the simplest apparatus. We would just try to imagine how the experiments worked, take the findings given in the book on faith and memorize the laws. We tried rolling marbles down a plank to demonstrate acceleration and velocity but Mr. Johnston didn't offer us any help and the "per second per second" business completely baffled me. What with Mr. Johnston's good training in maths, however, and fairly good memories we all passed the final exams.

Algebra was second only to arithmetic in Mr. Johnston's scale of values. Here again Ethel was far out ahead and I lagged far behind. When Mr. Johnston worked things out on the board, he went so quickly that I couldn't follow. Then he would erase his solution and give us examples to do. Ethel would soon have her hand up that she had finished. Annie would be a while longer. Then he would start shouting at me "Haven't you got that done yet?" and my mind would go a complete blank. One day I felt so hopeless and defeated that when he yelled at me I burst into tears. When he looked at me in astonishment I whimpered that I wasn't feeling well, so he told me to go outside and sit in the shade for a while.

It was a beautiful spring day and I remember how

wonderful it seemed to me to be sitting there in the fresh air with the scent of flowers around me instead of stale schoolroom smells. I could hear Mr. Johnston shouting inside but he wasn't shouting at me, and I didn't need to worry about algebra problems for a little while.

Like the teachers of his day, Mr. Johnston put great emphasis on grammar, and everyone was drilled on parsing and the analysis of sentences. He would be very shocked if he could see the lack of such teaching in our schools today.

He also gave the younger ones plenty of practice in reading aloud. Each class went up to the front and stood in a row and he wasn't backward in criticizing their pronunciation and expression. He stressed penmanship too, and being a beautiful writer himself, he gave his pupils examples on the board to copy. He used the so-called "muscular movement" and made us cover pages practising goose eggs and other exercises. Chaddy was such a credit to him that she won two prizes in handwriting at the Nanton fair. I have mentioned Ethel's clear flowing hand, and Annie's writing was pretty, although she employed numerous curlicues that gave her exercises an ornate appearance. But I could never rise above my plain, round, immature style and was no credit to him at all.

Mr. Johnston gave no instruction to us three in Standard VI on the subjects of literature, history, geography, botany and agriculture or drawing. We had our texts and he, like Miss Hunt, thought we could get all we needed by reading them ourselves and then talking them over in our own corner. We had no reference books except a dictionary, not even a set of encyclopaedias. However we never dared to argue when Mr. Johnston was the teacher, so we really got down to business and had some interesting discussions.

All the classes had composition periods fairly regularly and I remember he used to illustrate the importance of punctuation by a story about a barber who put a sign in his window which said "What do you think? I'll shave you for nothing and give you a drink!" but when customers flocked in to take advantage of his offer, he would change the punctuation so that the same words exclaimed indignantly,

"What! Do you think I'll shave you for nothing and give you a drink?" I'm sure Mr. Johnston's pupils remembered this story better than they would a set of rules.

He was very strong on giving everyone compositions to write. While we racked our brains and chewed our pencils it kept us busy and quiet and gave him a chance to relax. I can't remember that he ever corrected the compositions or had them turned in to him, but he used to walk up and down the aisles, stopping at this desk and that to read a bit from some luckless pupil's efforts, who squirmed and got red and hastily made the corrections he suggested.

It was his custom on Friday afternoons to have a little informal concert in the last period. On these occasions he would ask two or three to stand and read aloud the compositions they had written. I always liked writing compositions but I was covered with confusion if I had to read one aloud. There was never a set programme for these little concerts. Sometimes the whole school sang songs, and Mr. Johnston had taught us some rounds which we enjoyed very much especially "Glide along my bonnie boat" which we sang lustily. Then he would ask if anyone had a recitation or song to give and the shy ones, like Leslie Hawk, would be encouraged and even shoved by their classmates to get up and perform. Some rather liked doing it, and May Eversfield was especially good as she had had some elocution lessons in England. She had a whole repertoire, but the favorites with the children were "The Spotted Giraffe," "The White Rabbit," and "Little Orphan Annie." When she gave the latter she would lean forward, her dark eyes glinting, and point around the room saying in a solemn voice, "An' the goblins will git *you* — and *you* — and *you* — Ef you don't watch out." The little kids would giggle and yet shiver a bit and look fearfully around.

As spring came and the crocuses began to bloom I got an inspiration to write a sort of little pageant about the seasons which I thought we could act at the Friday afternoon programme. I wrote it in great secrecy and then called Chaddy, Annie and May Eversfield to a meeting behind the school stable. Ethel was older and we were afraid she would

think it too juvenile for her, and as there were just four seasons, there were just four parts anyway.

We decided that Annie should be Spring, as she was tall and willowy with golden red hair. We would string crocuses and buffalo beans into garlands and make a wreath of them for her to wear. She was to enter speaking:

“Oh I am Spring! I have come from the south

And I'm welcomed where'er I go.

I bring warm showers to help the growth

Of the plants, as all of you know.

I call the birds from the Southland too,

To come and sing once more

To brighten the lives of all of you

As they've always done before.

I start the flowers from their winter sleep

And they spring up bright and gay,

And all day long they dance and leap

With the sunbeams bright to play.

I melt the ice from the little streams

Till they merrily dance along

And tell queer tales of their winter dreams

In a happy rippling song.

I start the leaves on every tree,

I make the old world gay.

I set each living creature free

As swift I speed on my way.”

Chaddy was to be Summer and for her costume we decided on a thin summer dress and a large shady hat, and since haymaking went with summer, we would have a big bundle of hay for her to carry. We felt that a hay-fork would be too unromantic. Her lines went:

“Oh I am Summer. I come after Spring

And help her work along.

The hottest rays of the sun I bring

To make plants tall and strong.

I turn the grass into scented hay

And blow its perfume about.

I watch o'er the birds as they brood each day

To hatch their wee ones out.

I turn the sky to a deep clear blue
With never a cloud in sight.
The cattle and sheep all love me too,
As they bask in my warm sunlight.
I ripen the grain and the fruit on the trees
So soon to be garnered in.
I watch o'er the butterflies bright and the bees
As they gather their nectar in.
Wherever I go I bring warmth and light
As I linger here and there.
Wherever I go the days are bright
And the earth is glad and fair."

May had long hair of a warm autumn brown colour, so we said she should be Autumn and wear her hair hanging in a rather windswept way about her. She had a tartan dress in greens and browns which we felt would be perfect for the part, and instead of autumn leaves which were non-existent on the prairie, we would make up a small sheaf of unthreshed grain for her. She would enter and announce herself as the other two had, saying

"I'm Autumn. Oh dear me! I thought
That Summer would never go,
For into the bins the grain's to be brought
Ere winter comes you know. '
You think I have little else to do
But blow folks' bonnets away,
But if you listen I'll try to show you
I do not always play.
I gather into the bins the grain,
And pile the straw up high.
I blow the leaves from the trees like rain,
And laugh as they fall do I.
I chase the birds away from the north
Before the cold winds blow.
I scatter the seeds of the flowers o'er the earth
To rest till Spring comes, you know.
I prepare the house, the barn and the tree
For Winter with frost and snow,
And then you see the last of me

As merrily onward I go."

I, being fat and sturdy, was naturally given the part of Winter and entered dressed in a heavy coat, furs and mittens, announcing:

"Hello! I'm Winter, welcome twice,
When I come and when I go.
I shake my arms and in a trice
Down comes the flaky snow.
The boys and girls get skates and sleighs
And have some jolly fun.
They grow to love my icy ways
And laugh and play each one.
I send Jack Frost to bite their toes,
But what care they for that?
And when he bites them on the nose
They only shout and laugh.
The old folks gather round the fire
And talk of days gone by.
They laugh and pile the fire up higher
When they hear the cold winds sigh.
They love me I am sure although
I'm saucy and so bold.
Though sometimes glad to see me go
They're glad that I *am* cold."

The "stage" instructions were for each girl as she finished her lines, to stand to one side, and then after Winter had spoken, all four were to stand in a row and say in unison:

"Yes, you are glad to see us all
Whene'er we come around,
And when each year we make our call
Some change on earth is found.
We represent the watchful care
Of our Creator's love
To those on earth; so each one here
Should look to Him above
And grumble not when things don't go
Always with song and jest,
But know Life's seasons, too, are planned

All for the very best."

I must insert an explanation here that when I came to write about this incident in my childhood, I could remember very clearly the writing of my little pageant and our humiliating attempt to produce it, but I could remember only a few of the lines. With a faint hope of finding the manuscript I rummaged through a box of youthful treasures in the basement and was rewarded by finding it. While the verses sounded stilted to me as I re-read them after fifty years, full of clichés, and imitative of the Victorian style and sentiment to which I had been exposed, I remembered that I was only fourteen years old when I wrote them, and decided it was a brave effort for a child of that age.

Anyway we all learned our parts and rehearsed out behind the stable at recess and in noon hours, driving off any curious classmates. We felt very important and also thrilled with our creation. On the Friday afternoon we had our flower garlands and all our other properties collected ready in the cloak-room, but it never occurred to us to tell Mr. Johnston what we were planning. We would wait till he asked for volunteers for the programme and then we would spring our surprise on him and the whole school (although most of the kids knew that something was brewing).

But alas, Mr. Johnston was in bad humour that afternoon. Some of the pupils hadn't got their work done or had misbehaved, and for punishment he wasn't having any concert. We all held him in quite a bit of awe, something the uninhibited youngsters of today would hardly understand, and none of us had the courage to pipe up and tell him about our "play" as we had grandly referred to it among ourselves. There we sat with bowed heads, unhappy and embarrassed till finally the miserable afternoon ended and we were dismissed.

Then as we filed out, Mr. Johnston suddenly caught sight of the flowers, the hay, the grain and my winter garments which we had piled conveniently near the door. "Who put that stuff here?" he roared. "Get it out of here."

Still not daring to say a word, we stooped and gathered

it up, but as May Eversfield strode outside with her sheaf, she declared in an indignant voice, sounding every "r" — "This is the last str-r-raw!" She was unconscious of the pun.

It was indeed, so far as our effort was concerned, the last straw. Someone, probably Ethel, told Mr. Johnston about it afterwards, and he asked why we didn't let him know. He even suggested our doing it another time, but it was getting on towards exams by then, and besides it had fallen so flat that we didn't feel like reviving it.

For a long time, however, whenever Annie wanted to get a rise out of me, or irritate me especially, she would start declaiming, "Oh I am Spring! I have come from the South," and she never failed to get a good reaction. It was my first and last effort at dramatic creation.

Chapter Thirty-Four

THE BLIZZARD

During the winter months the work horses hadn't much to do, so Father fitted the little stone-boat sleigh with shafts and let us three girls drive Jess, the black mare, in it to school. It was a wonderful improvement on walking in the cold weather, and while Jess wasn't noted for speed, her willing jog-trot got us to school in good time.

Father had told us that if a blizzard came up we must stay right in the school till it was over, for with no roads or fences to guide us over most of the way, we could soon get lost in the blinding snow. There were grim tales of people who had wandered for hours over the prairie and some who had frozen to death.

One bitter January day just such a blizzard came up. We watched uneasily through the schoolroom windows as the fine particles of snow were driven by the storm with ever increasing fury, till visibility was almost completely gone. The frame schoolhouse creaked ominously and the wind howled around its corners, rattling the windows.

When the regular closing time of 3:30 came, we told Mr. Johnston what Father had said about our staying in the school if a blizzard came up. The Broomfields and a few others who lived south of the school decided to go home because they would have the wind on their backs, and besides that, there were fences most of their way to guide them.

Mr. Johnston said he would stay with us, and several other students who had to go north and cross open prairie decided to stay too. There were some who lived quite near and had no fear of being lost, but thought it would be a lark to spend the night in the school. Mr. Johnston had the boys put on their coats and bring in several scuttles of coal from the shed and any rugs and blankets from the buggies and sleighs. He then made a survey of what was left in the children's dinner-pails and took charge of it for our evening



Louis Roy's hired man, George Gilbert, on our horse "Dixie," (about 1906)

meal. We hadn't any lamps but he said we could sing and tell stories and play guessing games till bedtime. It was going to be a real adventure, and far from being alarmed, we were all quite thrilled.

Then suddenly we were startled by a loud banging on the door. Mr. Johnston went and we all followed. There stood George Gilbert, Louis Roy's hired man, holding Dixie, and behind him on Mark sat Father. Mother had wrapped her long Rob Roy shawl or "plaidie" around him and it was blowing about him so that he looked like a wild Highlander sitting on his horse there in the wind. Mother had been anxious about us, so he and George had come to escort us safely home. I do not recall where Jim was at the time, but probably working in Nanton.

It was really very good of them to come for us but we couldn't help feeling let down, and so did the other kids. Father and George harnessed Jess, and Mr. Johnston harnessed Charlie, saying he would see Leslie Hawk and others who went northwest safely home.

Ethel drove Jess and made Chaddy and me get down under the blankets. Father went ahead on Mark as he was a big horse and could break the way. Besides, he would make straight for home, whereas Dixie had a carefree attitude about directions and would as soon go one way as another, preferably with the wind at his back. He followed closely behind Mark, and then we came, Jess plodding sturdily along through the drifts. Mark was her team-mate and she followed him with confidence. The land sloped up to quite a rise in the open section before we came to the railway crossing and we could see Father at the top of the slope silhouetted against the swirling snow, his red and black shawl blowing in the wind.

It was bitterly cold and when I peered out from under the blankets I could see part of Ethel's rather prominent nose frozen white. You couldn't actually feel when your face or ears froze, but you could certainly feel it when it began to thaw out.

We had still a mile and a half to go northeast from the track before we got home and into the warm kitchen and

the warmth of Mother's welcome. Ethel's nose was rubbed with snow in the approved method of thawing frost bite, which has since been discredited I have heard.

The horses had the good feed of oats they deserved. George Gilbert stayed for supper and as we sat around the table eating the hot tasty meal Bee had cooked, and heard the wind howling around the house, we were glad after all to be home and not going to bed on the hard floor of the dark schoolhouse after a supper of leftovers and scraps from our dinner pails.

The blizzard was part of the terrible winter of 1906-07 which old-timers were to talk about for many a long day. The snow was so deep that the cattle could not get at the grass and died by the thousands. The horses could paw the snow and clear a space of grass, but the poor cattle were not equipped to do this. We were too inexperienced to realize at first how bad things were, but by spring dead cattle lay scattered all over the prairie and the coyotes feasted on the carcasses.

One day a wild looking cow, its ribs and hip bones sticking out and part of its ears and tail frozen off, came through the fence into our yard and made a rush at the haystack. The poor creature tore at the hay in a famished way and Father let her stay. She had the "Bar U" brand and we heard later she was the last survivor of a bunch that had perished to the north of us. Somehow this one poor beast had had sufficient purpose or strength to help her struggle through the deep frozen snow to our stack.

Chaddy and I called her "Mrs. Buffalo Bones" and we were careful to keep out of the reach of her sharp horns, for even in her weakened condition she would make lunges at us, tossing her head threateningly, for her hard life must have made her distrust everyone and everything. She lay down in the shelter of the stack, and Chaddy and I were glad she was out of the sub-zero wind, and had a full paunch for a change.

But she had made port too late, for in the morning when we went out we found that she was still lying down and could not get up. She made desperate attempts but her

legs were weakened by starvation and she couldn't get to her feet, and she was too wild for anyone to help her.

Chaddy and I carried hay to her and water in a pail. Her eyes looked wild with fear and she would still toss her head at us, but she drank the water and ate the hay. We thought she might get strong enough to get up, but after a few days Father decided she was only getting weaker. Finally as an act of mercy he got Jim to shoot her and they dragged the thin carcass away out on the prairie. That night we could hear the coyotes howling as they gathered to feast on the dead cow. Father reported what he had done to the nearest Bar-U man, because he did not want to get into trouble over it.

When old-timers talk about that winter, they always speak of the great losses suffered by the ranchers and they were tremendous, but they seldom mention what the poor cattle suffered from starvation and cold. Back in the foothills it was better, for there was a certain amount of shelter, but on the prairie there was nothing to protect the starving beasts from the sub-zero winds.

People talk sentimentally about the good old days, and they *were* good old days in many ways, but Chaddy and I will always remember poor old Mrs. Buffalo-Bones and the thousands like her that perished in the snow that winter.

That year seemed to be one of violent and extreme weather, and another unpleasant surprise for us came in the summer when we had our first severe hail-storm.

The grain fields were coming into head and Mother's garden was supplying us with green peas and other good things when everything was flattened and pounded into the ground by a terrific hail-storm. We had heard of these but had no idea how frightening and devastating they were. We saw the strange livid clouds gathering and then we heard thumps on the roof and on the north side of the house. We ran outside to see what it was but soon ran in again when we saw and felt the chunks of hail like jagged pieces of ice. Fortunately we had only one window to the north but some panes in it were smashed before Mother got pillows to hold against it. Mother fretted about her chickens but

I don't remember that she lost any, as they were getting to a fair size and probably took shelter in the coops.

Poor Jim was coming home in the wagon driving Mark and Jess when the hail began falling. He had got nearly home and Ethel ran out to open the gate for him, but the horses would not face the hail so he turned them around on the trail with their backs to the storm. Ethel ran into the stable for shelter, and Jim picked up the long cushion that we kept on the wagon seat, and put it over his head to protect him, but the feathers ran down to the ends and the cotton material was all that was left between his head and the pounding stones. The two horses stood remarkably quiet under such punishment. Afterwards they had lumps on their backs where the hail chunks had hit them.

We all felt pretty sick when we saw the ruin of the crop and garden. The latter smelled as though someone had been eating onions, for these were pounded into shreds. Father was very blue about the destruction of his wheat, but it made a wonderful come-back and he harvested a good crop that fall after all. He was not always so fortunate. I recall one year when he had made just one round with the binder when a hailstorm struck and his whole ripe crop was pounded into the ground. It was too late for it to make any recovery, and he simply pulled the binder in from the field.

I can't remember if he had hail insurance on at the time of our first storm, but afterwards he always made a point of carrying it, unless it was such a dry year that there was no prospect of a crop. It turned out as hail statistics were to show, that we were in a hail belt. Father used to say that what with one thing and another, wheat growing was a bigger gamble than horse racing.

Chapter Thirty-Five

WE ARE PROMOTED FROM WAGON TO TO DEMOCRAT TO BUGGY

Somewhere about the next spring, our means of transportation improved. Father bought what was called a light democrat. It had one seat like a buggy but projected further behind so that there was room to carry a light load. He decided to break Dixie to drive in it and we all wondered how he would take to it, for he was young and full of life. At first he trembled with fear when the vehicle came rumbling behind him, but he was a sensible little fellow with not a mean streak in him. Father talked to him quietly and encouragingly, and after a few trials he trotted along as sedately as if he had been used to harness all his life. The only thing he rebelled at was holding back going down a hill. He seemed to think that when the load was coming easily, the thing to do was to keep going and make time. It took quite a bit of coaxing and pulling on the lines to get him to walk down the coulee banks while holding back on the shafts. When he did get onto it, he would arch his neck and flirt his tail to show his impatience. We were told that trotting would spoil his gait as a saddle horse, but he had always been rather rough to ride and we didn't notice much difference.

Soon after Dixie was broken to harness, Jim drove two or three of us to church one Sunday when service was being held in Mrs. Linton's house. A neighbor who was driving a big sorrel in his buggy came up behind us and then went to pass. A glance over his blinkers showed Dixie what was happening and he was off like a streak. He made no pretence of trotting. His business was to keep ahead so he ran, and Jim didn't pull him up as Father would have done. In a short time the sorrel broke into a gallop too. There weren't any lanes to keep in, nor traffic to avoid, as they had the whole prairie. Dixie kept to the advantage of the trail but

the other horse was much larger and was used to pulling a load. We covered the last quarter mile at a record pace.

All the church people were waiting outside the house in the spring sunshine till the service began, and they were quite entertained by the race. Even the minister watched with interest. When Dixie with a final spurt dashed up ahead of his rival, everybody applauded, including the minister, and nobody seemed to think it was anything out of the way to race to church. Chaddy and I were quite proud and jumped down and patted Dixie, noting that he hadn't turned a hair while the big sorrel was sweating. Then we all went inside and listened to the sermon which we enjoyed all the more because the preacher had been a good sport about the race.

When the time for the picnic to the hills came around, Father and Mother decided not to go, and Bee went with Walt Hawk who drove his little fat team that we used to call "the dumplings" when we were teasing Bee. Jim drove Dixie in the little democrat, taking us three girls with one of us sitting on a box in behind. When we came to the first hill, Ethel said some of us should get out and walk as it was too heavy a load for Dixie. "Stay where you are," said Jim. "If he can't pull us up a little hill like this we might as well turn back, for we'll never make it." We girls were more tender hearted and tried to save the game little fellow. In the fall Father sent Mother and Chaddy into Nanton with Dixie in the democrat to bring out a load of binder-twine. There were several hundred pounds of twine and it made a heavy load, so whenever they came to a hill, especially the big hill at the cemetery, they both got out. Chaddy led Dixie and Mother walked behind and held the lines, while Dixie dug in his toes and pulled the load to the top.

Since Dixie was used so much for driving now, Father bought another saddle horse, Sammie, a little buckskin with one wall-eye. He was a gentle, willing little fellow, too, but more nervous than Dixie. He had such a smooth gait that when he cantered it was like riding in a rocking-chair. But unfortunately his previous owner had been too heavy for him and had ridden him too hard so that his knees had



Ready for a ride August 1907: Chaddy Thomson (aged 13) on Dixie and Georgie Thomson (aged 15) on Sammie, and Buckles waiting to go along. Spruce trees brought from the hills by Father in the background. Also croquet lawn. Photo by Edmond Auclair.

been damaged by the strain, or as we said, he was "over in the knees." He would be cantering smoothly along when suddenly his knees would buckle and down he would go, taking his rider with him. He would scramble to his feet and stand waiting for one with an apologetic air as if to say, "I didn't mean to do it. I couldn't help it."

In another year or so Father bought a second-hand two-seated democrat which needed a team to pull it. It had belonged to the Mounted Police and was quite imposing looking with upholstered seats, yellow wheels and a brake to be operated by the driver. As Louis Roy would say, "It was a big advance." At first Father drove one of the big teams in it, but later when they were busy, Sammie was broken to drive with Dixie. The rig was really too heavy for these two little ponies, but they used to trot along with it very smartly. Chaddy liked to be out around the stable and she was soon able to harness them for Father and drive out the lane with a flourish.

If we girls went on an outing in the democrat, it was usually Chaddy who drove. One day when we had two out-of-town visitors, we took them down to call on Martha and Harriet Hagerman who were keeping house for their brothers Jo and Johnnie. When we came to Gust Eld's farm, some of his cattle were outside his fence and one cow was lying down on the trail peacefully chewing her cud. Chaddy was in the driver's seat as usual and perhaps showing off a bit before the guests. The horses were trotting briskly along as we drew near the cow, and Chaddy, thinking it would get up and take itself off, never slowed down. Of course there was no horn to honk. One cow more or less didn't worry the two little range ponies, and they kept on as unconcerned as their driver. The cow never budged and before we knew it, she was right under the pole with a horse on each side. Then she decided to get up and somehow scrambled out behind Dixie under the traces and trotted away, fortunately unhurt.

Mrs. Eld, however, had seen it all from her window, and out she came shouting angrily at us. Chaddy paid no attention, and the team, after slowing down to let the cow extricate herself, trotted on as if nothing had happened and

we went gaily on our way. Some of us glanced back rather fearfully at the angry woman waving her arms and threatening us with the Mounties, but nothing more came of it and we were lucky to get off without an accident. We didn't tell Father.

Another episode in which Dixie and Sammie were involved happened one night when Jim had driven Bee and Ethel and Will Rothwell to a dance at Porcupine School. It was a chilly night and as there wasn't much room in the school stable, our team like most of the others was tied to a fence post. Even though blanketed they got cold, and when the folks started for home, Sammie balked. He would never have done this if one of the girls had been driving, but he had learned to be mistrustful of men and somehow Jim and he did not see eye to eye. Moreover a balky horse always made Jim furious, as had happened the time with Queenie, and he took the whip to Sammie, while the girls pleaded with him. When Sammie finally made up his mind to go, Jim was still so enraged that he left the brakes on and made the horses gallop.

Bee and Ethel were both crying and Will Rothwell added his pleading to theirs, with no result. Whereupon Will said, "Stop the horses and let me out. I won't ride with you."

"Then get out," said Jim and pulled the team up. Will got out and began walking and Jim drove on, but his temper never lasted long. He began to laugh, and stopping the team again, called to Will to come on and get in.

Will by this time was as furious as Jim. "Get out of my way," he shouted with an angry wave of his arm, and strode on along the trail. He was a good walker and it didn't bother him, but Jim was a chastened youth, especially when he had to bear the reproaches of his two sisters or their disapproving silence.

Our next advance in transportation was when Father bought a gentle strawberry roan mare named Ruby but which he changed to Ruth. She was sturdier than Sammie and could either be driven with Dixie in the democrat or singly in a smart buggy which Father eventually bought.

We felt that with this last we had "gone about as fur as we could go."

Ruth wasn't in the least temperamental and she and Dixie made a good team. The three little horses stood in a row in their stalls with Sammie in the middle. Somehow no matter how quiet they were in the daytime in harness or saddle, when night came we would be awakened from our sleep by a sudden terrific banging in the stable. Father would get up and go out with the lantern and there would be Dixie and Ruth with their hind legs over as near as they could get and kicking out at each other, all the while squealing viciously. Poor Sammie would be crouched between them, trembling and rolling his eyes with fear.

Father finally solved the problem by having a little strap for each of them with a piece of chain attached, and last thing at night one of us would buckle a strap to a hind leg of each kicker above the fetlock. Both were so gentle that Chaddy and I could go in in the dark and fasten the straps without the slightest fear. One would never dream that without these they would have been lambasting each other.

After we got the buggy, Father used to take great pride in driving Ruth around in it. At harvest time our Uncle Alex, Father's eldest brother who was something of a rolling stone, came up from Montana to visit us. I remember the day he came he looked me over and finally said, "You're a sawed-off hammered-down little runt," but somehow I didn't feel insulted. He had a slow, drawling twang that he picked up across the line that made him seem humorous to us. He took me aside and told me confidentially, "Aunt Nellie thinks I'm drunk." He wasn't drunk but he must have had quite a few drinks.

He got a job stooking for us and when Father used to go driving around with Ruth, Uncle Alex would make little digs at him for not doing more work. Father, to justify himself, said he had a lot to attend to and added "It gets pretty tiresome driving around like this."

Uncle Alex looked at him and drawled, "Did you ever try walking?"

Chapter Thirty-Six

OUR KITCHEN HAD NO MODERN CONVENIENCES or A WOMAN'S WORK WAS NEVER DONE ON THE HOMESTEAD

Like other homesteaders, Father had to go in debt to the farm-implement dealers, for crops could not be put in nor taken off without plousg, disks, harrows, seed-drills and binders. Even though this machinery sounds very simple, almost primitive, compared with the high-powered implements of today, they represented a tremendous outlay in those early times before the homesteaders had had a chance to make much off the land. The women folk realized that these were necessary and legitimate expenditures and did not complain about their own primitive household equipment.

Fortunately when we look back now to the homesteading days, we tend to forget the hardships in our daily life, and remember the happy, carefree side of it all. Actually it would be hard for us now to go back washing in the common basin in the kitchen sink and drying on the common roller-towel on the kitchen door. We had washstands in the bedrooms with the standard china equipment, and if we were dressing in the afternoon or in the evening to go out, we would carry up a lard-pail filled with warm water from the reservoir or tank at the back of the kitchen stove. Most of our baths were of the sponge variety with this limited water supply. For a real bath we had to use a wooden wash-tub on the kitchen floor, with a few inches of precious water. Even this would be shared with two or three of us, simply adding a dipper or two of fresh warm water each time. We all drank from the same tin dipper, dipped into the water pail in the corner.

It was years before Mother had even the crudest washing machine. She and Bee and Ethel rubbed the clothes clean on a washboard and wrung them out with their hands. Our

first washing machine was worked by pushing a lever back and forth to work an arrangement inside the tub, which was actually harder work than using the washboard, except that it had the advantage of getting a whole tubful done at one time.

We had two kinds of irons, the traditional "flatiron" designed pointed at the front and square at the back and with an attached handle, and those pointed at both ends in what was considered a modern improvement, with a detachable handle which fitted with a spring into notches in the the top of the iron. Both types had to be heated on top of the stove, and even with a good coal fire, an iron cooled quickly, so that the ironer spent a lot of her time walking back and forth between stove and ironing board. A frilled white dress of white muslin or a damask linen tablecloth might take nearly an hour to iron. In the summer it was a hot job with the coal fire having to be kept on. Fortunately for those doing the ironing, frilled white dresses and damask tablecloths were not used everyday.

In the summer of 1908 our cousin Art Oliver came out from Manitoba to visit us and Father conscripted him to help Jim build a shed-roofed kitchen like a lean-to at the back of our house, with a bedroom at one end and the cellar stairway moved to go down between these two rooms. This gave us some much needed space, but on a summer's day the kitchen proved to be the hottest inferno one could imagine. There were two small square windows above the work table on the south wall where they got the hottest sun of the day. There was no direct draught through the room because of the bedroom to the north and the coal shed and passage at the back door. There was a great deal of cooking and baking to be done each day, as well as the weekly washing and ironing, so that the coal range had to be kept going hard, while the prairie sun beat down on the flat roof. The clothes my mother and sisters and all women wore then were not suited fo rhot weather. Tight corsets, long petticoats and skirts, and blouses with high necks were the order of the day, a far cry from the sleeveless shirts and carefree pedal-pushers or shorts of today.

Fortunately we had all our meals in the old kitchen, now called the dining-room, which had a good cross draught, and in the hot weather we did any household jobs there that we could. For the winter weather, Father got a big pot-bellied heating stove with mica panes in the door through which the fire glowed, which made the room more than ever the centre of the house. An old-fashioned lounge stood along the wall near the stove and Father's armchair and Mother's little rocker were nearby. The only heat upstairs was still the stovepipe from the heater. We all took irons or bricks wrapped in newspapers or flannel to bed with us, but the floors upstairs and downstairs, too, must have been draughty, though I can't remember minding it much. All the windows in the house were frosted over most of the winter as we had no storm windows.

Whenever possible in the summer the kitchen range was allowed to go out in the afternoon. Mother and whichever girls were home would change into a clean dress. About five, Mother would go out to the henhouse and gather the eggs. On the way into the house she would stop and pick up some chips at the woodpile. Our wood supply came from old railroad ties discarded by the section men. These were sawed into chunks and split, rather grudgingly, by the men who always had something else to do that they thought more important. So Mother would carry in some chips in her apron and put the kettle on for an early tea for us women folk. It was nice having it without the men, and besides we were through earlier to get the cows in and milked after putting the men's supper on the table. We nearly always had an egg that was really new-laid, and the tea always seemed hotter because the water was boiled on chips. In some districts people made fires with what were known as "buffalo chips," really dried cattle dung, but I don't remember anyone in our area using this kind of fuel.

Refrigeration which is taken so much for granted now on the farms in Southern Alberta as well as in the city, was an unheard of thing on the homestead. It was surprising how cool the unwallled, unfloored dug-outs called cellars were on a hot day. The cream rose on the shallow pans of

milk there, and no one complained about milk and other food not being chilled, because we didn't miss what we had never had.

Most of our meat was our home-cured pork which kept well. Once we began to raise pigs we always had plenty of this. They were butchered in the fall, and it was a sad day for Chaddy and me. We would go to the farthest corner of the house and plug our ears so we would not hear their despairing shrieks. Father would never stick a pig nor even kill a chicken. He always had a neighbor come to kill the pigs, and Mother used to wring the necks of chickens. She didn't like doing it any better than he did, but she was realistic and if we were going to eat, someone had to do the deed. She did it as she did many of the unpleasant things that had to be done. I can't remember Father doing anything he didn't want to do.

Once the pigs were butchered, Mother had more hard jobs to do. The lard had to be rendered, a greasy, smelly job, but we all enjoyed the pies and other good things made with it afterwards.

The heads, after being trimmed and cleaned, were cooked in a big boiler, and then at night we all sat around the table with a plate, knife and fork, and Mother gave us portions of the meat to cut up into little pieces. This was put back into the strained broth and Mother seasoned it with salt and plenty of pepper, after which it was poured into bowls and other containers and set to jell. We thought we would never want to see it again, but when it appeared on the supper table on a cold night, turned out of its mold jelled and shiny, and served with mustard, fried potatoes and perhaps some pickles, it really tasted wonderful.

Mother ground up trimmings and odd pieces of the meat and made them into sausage seasoned with sage and other tasty things and packed away in crocks. This too tasted delicious when made into balls and fried.

Mother had got a good recipe for "pickling" ham and bacon from a book put out by the Family Herald or the Farmers' Advocate and became quite an expert at curing this meat. We did not have a smoke-house as they did in

Ontario and would not have had the proper bark to smoke in it, but Mother made a brine according to the formula given in the book and she got quite a reputation for her bacon and ham. I admit we enjoyed it as much as anyone, but when one of the calves we had raised was slaughtered, it was different. When Father brought home a big roast from the carcass of "Ben Hur" it was too much for Chaddy and me. We would have felt like cannibals if we had eaten any. Probably farmers who do not name their animals, or otherwise show interest and affection, save themselves a lot of grief, for farming is a business, though a sad business at times.

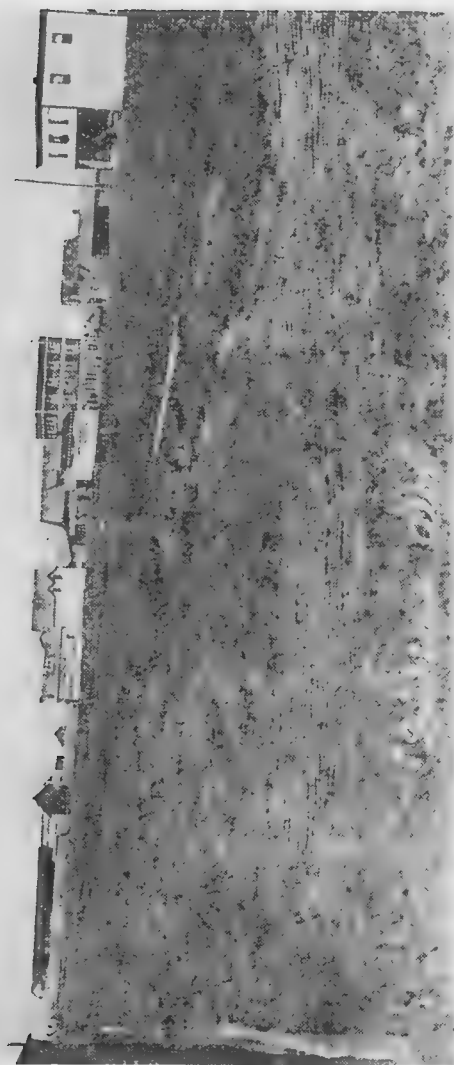
Chapter Thirty-Seven

PARKLAND SLOWLY BECOMES A REALITY

Along about the autumn of 1906 or the spring of 1907, Mr. Will Sharman of Brooklyn, New York, arrived in our neighborhood and brought us two great assets — a general store and a post office. Why he ever came to this sparsely settled district, so remote and so completely different in character from his native Brooklyn, I cannot now remember, if I ever knew. He built his store at the infant townsite of Parkhill, the first permanent building there, and a corner was partitioned off for the post office. To avoid confusion with Parkhill, Ontario, the name was changed to "Parkland," a name which always leads strangers to expect a place with trees instead of the typical prairie in which it stands.

The store had living quarters above for Will Sharman and his brother Ed who later joined him. Mr. Gus Hedlund put up the building which he made so low that the Sharmans could not stand up around the sides of the apartment upstairs because of the low slope of the roof. When Will went back to Brooklyn about two years later and brought out a bride, people often wondered what she thought of the home she came to.

Will was a fine chap and very well liked. He did a roaring business because it was a great convenience for homesteaders in the districts round about to be able to get their mail as well as supplies without making the long trip to Nanton or Stavely. He kept a little of everything, groceries, drygoods, notions, hardware, but chiefly groceries. When I went up to high school in Calgary in the fall of 1907, one of the first English compositions I had to write was a description of an interior, and I wrote about Will Sharman's store. I think I exaggerated a little when I had the cat sleep in the dried apple barrel, and travellers who stayed overnight stretching out on the counter with some of Will's merchandise such as blankets or dressgoods unrolled to cover them-



Parkland, Alberta (date not known, after 1909). Some of the buildings (left to right): Crown Lumber Co., Sharman's General Store, Mayhew's Real Estate Office, Parkland Hotel owned by Dave Clark, Barber Shop and Pool Room (Stirling Fraser first owner), Harness Shop of Scotty Greig, Alf Jones' Hardware Store (later became general store).



Parkland Livery Barn and Feed Stable, owned by Mr. Borger Berger. Photo taken about 1909.

selves. Anyway I do remember that the set-up was free and easy.

There was no railway station yet and the mail-bag had to be attached to a hook on a post beside the track. As the train went through the mail clerk threw off the mail for Parkland, and with a hooked rod picked off the outgoing mail from its post. When Ed or whoever did it brought the mail-bag in, if Will was busy in the store and a number of people waiting, he would simply empty the bag on the counter or even on the floor and the folks would pick out their own letters and papers.

When the townsite was being promoted by Mr. Bailey Powell, as I previously mentioned, he had formed a company consisting chiefly of the Parkhill clan from his father-in-law W. J. Parkhill M.P.P. down. The company was to get sections 15, 16, 17, and part of 9 and 21 for the townsite. In return they were to put up \$40,000 worth of buildings within a specified time. This they had not done and when the time ran out the agreement fell through and the company had



Parkland blacksmith shop. George Roberts, blacksmith, left. Andrew Johnson, Parkland old timer, right.

to relinquish most of the land, keeping only section 16, the present townsite, and 160 acres on the north side of section 9. Later on Mr. Amundsen of Claresholm and his son-in-law Mr. J. T. North bought Powell out, and Mr. North turned this land on section 9 into farm land. Mr. Wing finally bought the 80 acres east of the track and Mr. Sam Lowther the 80 acres west of the track.

The plan of the town as drawn up by Mr. Powell was very grandiose, with two main avenues named Powell and Parkhill running diagonally through the town and meeting in a square in the centre. Most of the streets were named after trees which had never seen the prairies, such as Cedar, Laurel, Oak and Chestnut. Mr. Powell went east to sell the lots after publishing a glowing prospectus in which he prophesied that the town would become a second Chicago with a huge packinghouse industry.

Even after Will Sharman opened his store there was very little doing till 1908 and 1909, after Amundsen and North took over. The biggest, perhaps the only building

boom the town was to see, began then. Father drew the gravel, sand and water to mix the cement for the first elevator, then called "The Imperial." The C.P.R. built a station and installed a man as agent and telegraph operator with living quarters above the station. Mr. Arthur Demings was agent in Parkland for many years and he and his wife took an active part in community affairs. Before long there were two passenger trains running each way daily.

Mr. Dave Clark built a hotel, A. E. Jones a hardware store, Scotty Greig a harness shop, Stirling Fraser a barber shop with poolroom attached, Nels Berger and Hans Burtness operated the livery-barn at different times, but I am not sure who built it, nor do I remember who built the blacksmith shop, though George Roberts was the blacksmith for many years. Ed Mayhew opened a real estate office, and an implement dealer from Nanton named Jones built the famous old Jones' Hall, usually just called "the Hall," where dances, church services, concerts, political meetings and every sort of public gathering was to be held for many years, till the building was finally condemned. Below the hall, the Bank of Hamilton opened a branch with Elgin Campbell as manager. Next to the hall, Tom Duggau built a store which he used as a butcher shop with living quarters above. It was later bought for the town's first restaurant by a Chinese whom everyone called "Charlie." Across the street quite a large store, also with living quarters above, was built by a Norwegian, Ollie Mittaugh, who had been living in the United States. Father drew the lumber and sand for this building. While it was under construction, Mr. Mittaugh put up a little shack, and Mrs. Mittaugh slept in it, the first woman to sleep in Parkland. The shack did not have a roof on it the first night. It was about 10 feet by 12 and was over near the elevators. Mrs. Mittaugh was a wonderful cook and very particular. I remember she bought butter from Mother and always used to taste it before she would buy it.

The Mittaughs sold the store to Nels Berger and left the neighborhood, and the store was successively run by Nels Berger, W. C. McRoberts and Mr. Bruce. There was also a boarding-house built about this time by a man named French

who later sold it to Mr. Stonehouse, an elevator man. When he left Parkland, it stood empty for years and was finally torn down and the lumber used by Sigurd Berger for building a chicken house.

J. T. North built himself an imposing residence at the south end of the village, which was considered the last word, for not only did it have a parlor, library, dining-room, kitchen and pantry downstairs, but upstairs, as well as smaller rooms, was what Mr. North called "the master bedroom" with a dressing-room attached. Unfortunately the plumbing was still outside but everyone took that for granted in those days.

In time the Methodists built a parsonage and the Presbyterians built a church which now belongs to the United Church of Canada. An attractive one-roomed school was built which some years later was included in a consolidated school along with Porcupine, Grassy Plains and other neighboring districts.

Parkland never went ahead as most new towns did, partly, perhaps, because of its delayed start, and partly because it was too close to the already established towns of Nanton and Stavely. It is still a busy place in the fall with trucks hauling grain to the elevators, which provide its most distinguishing feature. A few years ago the National Geographic Magazine in an article on Southern Alberta published a colored photograph of Parkland and its elevators as a typical Alberta hamlet.

But the blacksmith shop which used to do such a roaring trade in the old days, shoeing horses and sharpening ploughshares, has been closed for many years, along with the livery barn, while the harness shop ended selling gasoline.

On a Saturday night the young fellows used to ride in for a night on the town, thronging the station platform for the excitement of watching the train come in, before going across for a game of pool. The poolroom and the barber shop went long ago, while as for the railway, instead of two trains a day we used to have fifty years ago, Parkland now has to be content with a one or two-coach dayliner three

times a week, and it has to be flagged if you want it, for there is no longer an agent nor even a station there.

Alas! Bailey Powell's dream of founding a second Chicago was never to be realized.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

MORE EXAMINATIONS AND TWO MARRIAGES

Now I must go back to the end of June, 1907, when Annie Broomfield, Ethel and I wrote our departmental examinations for Standard VI. This time we had to go to Nanton and write in the school there under impartial supervision. The only other student I remember writing was a Nanton boy named, I think, Russell Burnett, whom we found very pleasant.

For the five days the exams lasted, we three girls stayed at Mrs. White's boarding house, and we felt very worldly and sophisticated sitting at her long table with its white linen cloth and napkins, along with bank clerks, real estate agents, school teachers, implement salesmen, Rev. Mr. McDonald the Methodist minister and even Dr. Creighton occasionally. In the evening we went for little walks around the town and were especially impressed by the large homes on what was called by some "Quality Row." One day Jim had to come into Nanton on some errand and he called at Mrs. White's and brought us a bag of raw fruit, oranges and bananas, a rare treat which made us feel our importance. Jim always thought of nice little surprises if he had any money, as indeed our older sisters did too.

The subjects on which we wrote this time were English Literature, English Composition or "Essays," I think it was called, British and Canadian History, Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, Bookkeeping, Botany and Agriculture, Physical Science, and Drawing. The questions which we were asked to answer may still be seen in the Annual Report for the Department of Education, 1907, as all the high school examination papers were published at the time in these reports. Just for the fun of it I consulted them not long ago in the Calgary Public Library and was glad I did not have to answer the questions now. When the results came out in August, our names were among the successful ones.

Meanwhile in the holidays Ethel had gone to work in the Nanton post office. While there she stayed again at Mrs. White's boarding house. The event of this stay which she recalls most vividly was the day Mrs. Jules Zang and her sister Jean Wannop (later Mrs. Sid Hooper) drove in with a horse and buggy all the way from Alston in a race with the stork. They got as far as Mrs. White's when baby Zang's arrival became imminent, causing quite a flurry among the boarders. As usual, Mrs. White's rooms were all full but Ethel offered to give up her room to Mrs. Zang, and there the baby was born.

Will Stirling was either postmaster in Nanton at this time or assistant to Mr. Marshall. The mail for Thigh Hill, a district some thirty miles southeast, came via Nanton and was taken out there by team, as there was no railway as yet in that area. Will Stirling heard from someone calling for the mail that they were badly in need of a teacher for the Thigh Hill school. Teachers with proper certificates were scarce and hard to get, especially for an isolated place. Mr. Stirling told Ethel about it and suggested that she apply for the job and get a temporary certificate from the Department of Education.

She took his advice, was accepted and Jim drove her out with the team the thirty miles or so from home to start on her teaching career, October 1st. Though she had no normal school training, she had a good basic Ontario grounding as well as her year at Porcupine School under Mr. Johnston. Quite a few of her pupils had come up from the States with their parents so the Alberta curriculum was new to them, but they were mostly the elementary grades and she soon had them organized. She had a good boarding place with Mrs. George Ecker who was not only a good cook and house-keeper but quite companionable as well. They used to while away the long winter evenings sitting in their rocking-chairs in Mrs. Ecker's shining kitchen talking, playing games, embroidering, or shopping in Eaton's catalogue. The Thigh Hill post office was in Mr. Deal's store on his farm where he owned a hall as well.

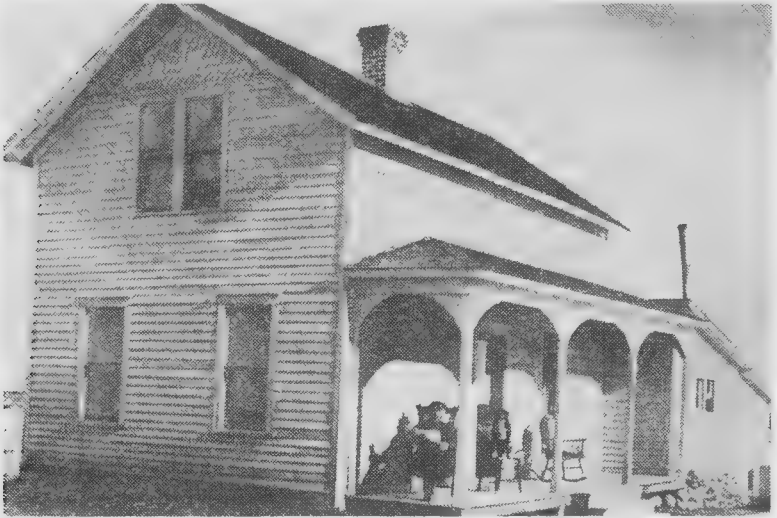
When the C.P.R. built a branch line from Aldersyde to

Lethbridge it did not pass near Mr. Deal's buildings, and the post office was moved to the new townsite on the railway which was called "Vulcan." According to an old-timer there, this name was chosen because there had been a big prairie fire in the district which blackened all the land around, so the name of the fire-god Vulcan was a suitable one. Others have said it was given because of the coal deposits found in the general area, a source of fire for the settlers. The homesteaders in our district used to drive out east to get coal from the Terriault mine, near Champion I think. It was a softer coal than the Galt coal from Lethbridge and did not last as well but it burned brightly and was much cheaper as there was no freight to be paid. A few farmers would go out at a time in a quiet season on the farm, and help each other load up and double up teams on the loads. They had to stay overnight as it was a long haul.

But to return to Ethel's affairs, she was asked to return in the fall for a second term in the school, but she refused as she did not feel qualified without her normal training. In 1909 she got a job with Will Sharman looking after the post office and helping in the Parkland store. That summer Will went back to Brooklyn to get married and while he was away the long distance telephone was installed in the store. Ethel had to learn how to operate it all by herself by studying the book of instructions. She sent out the first long distance call ever sent from Parkland. It was made by Mr. Houghton who had taken up a quarter of the former townsite land on Section 15. Ethel still remembers how annoyed she used to get at the Stavely Central who was always cutting in.

Of course at this time there were no private telephones in our district. I think it was the spring of 1915 when we first got one. It was a party line as all the rural phones were, and our ring was two short. The telephones were a "great advance," as Louis Roy would say, being not only a useful time saver for the farmers but adding brightness to the lives of the women by giving them a chance to chat and visit by phone with their neighbors. Some folks not only enjoyed their own calls but listened in to those of other

people whenever the phone rang. It was said that one woman used to fasten the receiver to her ear so that she could go on using both hands peeling potatoes or doing whatever job she had on hand. Sometimes it worked out very well. One day a farmer in an emergency phoned another to see if he



Our house on the homestead after being remodelled in 1909. My father (G. B. Thomson) and "Buckles" the dog on the chairs.

could borrow some money from him as he was short and had to take one of the children on the train to Calgary to go into hospital there. His friend didn't have enough either, but another neighbor who had been "rubbering" as it was called, chimed in, "I can lend it to you, Bill," and saved the situation. No one thought it much of a crime to "rubber," as it helped to pass the time for isolated people.

In the summer of 1909, Father got a carpenter and plasterer in to finish the inside of our house, making proper partitions, and moving the stairway to the north side of the sitting room instead of between the dining room and it. This allowed us to put an archway between the two rooms and gave more space. The front door was moved from the

west where it got the full force of the prevailing winds, to the south side of the house where it opened onto a verandah which Father had added there. While not actually modernized, the house was much improved by these changes. All summer while the work was going on, we lived in a large tent which Father had rented.

In December 1909 Ethel gave up her job as postal clerk, store clerk and telephone girl and married John Wilson. The Presbyterian minister of the time, Rev. Mr. Leslie, came out on the early morning train from Stavely to perform the ceremony, instead of driving his horse out, as it was a very cold day and he felt the cold very much, having come from British Guiana. He wasn't a good driver anyway. I remember one Sunday I was getting a lift to church with him when services were held in Grassy Plains School, and he had to make several attempts to steer the horse through the gate. We would be too close to the post on one side, so Mr. Leslie would saw on the lines, calling "Up, sir!" to the horse. Round we would go again and come up too close to the other post, while the congregation watched and enjoyed the performance. I didn't. So it was not surprising that he came out by train this cold wedding day. He had made the trip out in December 1908, just a year before, to marry Bee to Walt Hawk, so when he arrived for Ethel's wedding, Father warned him that he didn't want to see him coming around there again for such a purpose. Father had gone back east to visit his mother the winter Walt was courting Bee, and he used to say only half-jokingly that they would never have got engaged if he had been home. He actually never wanted any of his girls to get married.

The day of Ethel's wedding, Mr. Leslie brought his little satchel with him with fresh linen for the service. Some of the boys filled an empty whiskey bottle with cold tea and slipped it into the satchel, but they never had the satisfaction of knowing what his reaction was when he found it, or whether he was disappointed that it was only tea.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

I GO TO HIGH SCHOOL IN CALGARY

As for my own affairs, after I passed my Standard VI exam, it was decided to send me on to high school in Calgary where I could board with Winnie in her new home. Annie Broomfield came up too and stayed with relatives.

I was disappointed in the school itself as it consisted of three rather battered-looking grey frame buildings joined together by passages and divided into four classrooms. There were no grounds except for a tiny lawn, and among our near neighbors was a livery barn, the dog pound, and the brown wooden city hall. The latter stood on the corner of 2nd Street East and Seventh Avenue, and work was already being done behind it on the dignified, sandstone structure that was to replace it. About our only recreation was to go for walks around the block in recess time. Fortunately for us, the Log Cabin Bakery was just over a little way on 8th Avenue and we used to walk over there and buy ourselves a bun or doughnut.

The school was known to all the students of those days and is still referred to by graduates as Sleepy Hollow. No one seems to know how it started. One of the pieces of literature studied in Standard VI was the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and it may have taken its name from this, or perhaps from the Sleepy Hollow cemetery in which Washington Irving and other famous writers were buried, as a reflection on the lack of activities in the school.

There were only four teachers on the staff, and the fact that they were sufficient to instruct the whole high school population of Calgary is an indication of the vast changes that have taken place since then. I should not say all the high school population for there were also the Catholic schools of St. Mary's for boys and girls and the private boarding schools, St. Hilda's for girls and Western Canada for boys. Besides, the population of Calgary at that time

was only 21,000, and not everybody went to high school in those days.

As far as school went, my year there was very happy. The principal, J. A. or "Jack" Smith, taught mathematics, and while he wouldn't put up with any fooling and was very sarcastic, he had a quiet way of explaining things that didn't rattle me as Mr. Johnston had done, and I was soon coming out head in my old enemy algebra as well as arithmetic and geometry, the text of the latter being the first three books of Euclid.

Both Annie Broomfield and I distinguished ourselves in arithmetic after the drilling we had from Mr. Johnston. Mr. Smith used to dictate extra problems to the class from an old Ontario high school text, hard ones such as figuring the cost of grazing a certain number of horses, sheep and cattle pasturing together and of course the grass growing all the time. Whenever he read us a problem that had the name Smith in it, he changed it to Jones or Brown, but Annie Broomfield had a copy of the book which had belonged to an older member of the family and she would catch him out and say "Smith."

Miss MacPhail taught the English literature and composition and the French, but I wasn't permitted to take French as I hadn't had it the year before and so my class was a year ahead in it. It was the same with Latin, but I used to listen to the others and long to be taking it. Mr. Newcombe taught Latin as well as ancient history, and when he noticed me listening almost in tears the day they translated the death of Hector, he said if I would come back the next year for Standard VIII I could take the three years' Latin in one easily, but I knew we could not afford it. I was to go to Normal School and become a teacher.

We had also a science master, E. L. Hill, from whom we took chemistry, physics and animal life, which was not dignified by the pompous term "biology" then. We had no laboratory in the school so our practical instruction in these subjects was limited.

As we were just a small class in Standard VII we had pleasant times together. It wasn't so pleasant at Winnie's.

She and Billy lived with his parents, not a happy situation and unfair to a young bride. Besides this, the warnings from Winnie's classmates about Billy's drinking habits turned out to be true. She had been infatuated by his Irish charm and did not believe them, and fortunately or unfortunately for her, she remained in love with him to the end, and when he died she put a rose under his picture every day. It was a new experience for me and the first time I heard him come home literally "roaring drunk," it was a great shock. Winnie was pregnant with her first child who was born two months after I went there. I was terribly upset about the way things were with her, but I did not let them know at home, partly because it would have worried Mother so much and partly from loyalty to Winnie. We used to sit together in the evening at the dining-room table, I studying and she sewing by the light of a lamp she had got for a wedding present. It had a soft green shade trimmed with a pretty bead fringe and the light was less glaring than that from the electric fixtures above. The whole experience drew us closely together so that we felt a close bond that lasted till her death over fifty years later. Though I was ten years younger, I felt protective toward her and indeed once flew at Billy when I thought he was threatening her while drunk. I used to lie in bed and shiver when I heard him come home, and I developed nightmares, so that one night I got up and smashed the basin and pitcher and other chinaware on the washstand in my room. Later my room was taken by another boarder and I had to sleep on the parlor couch for a while. Every night Mrs. Magee Senior used to warn me not to get up in my sleep and smash her cherished possession, a parlor lamp with a globe-shaped shade with thistles hand-painted on it. This was on my mind so much that when I did walk in my sleep and woke up I would get down on my hands and knees and crawl back to my couch, feeling my way with my hands for fear I bumped into the stand with the lamp. I was so homesick that I would lie in the dark with my eyes shut and try to imagine I was in our own room at home with the carpet partitions and unfinished rafters overhead. I wrote to Mother that if

I saw old Roany going down 8th Avenue, I would run up to her and hug her.

I went for the doctor when Winnie's baby was born. She did not go to the hospital, as it was quite usual for women to have their babies at home in those days. Mother came up to nurse her. She had a long day's labour and it seemed dreadful to me to think of her going through such an ordeal. In the evening while waiting, Dr. Sanson came downstairs and showed Billy and me how to play "flying patience." He was a tall distinguished Englishman, and was as courteous to me, a fat, freckle-faced school girl, as he would have been to the grandest lady in town. In 1907 the doctors, all except one, drove a horse and buggy, and as the General Hospital was just a few blocks down the street from Winnie's home, we used to see them go by every day. If I were on my way to school when Dr. Sanson passed, he would salute me with his whip and call "Hello, Auntie!"

I was very proud to be allowed to wheel the baby, Madge, out in her carriage, the finest one Billy could buy, for he was very proud of his new daughter.

As Christmas drew near, I grew more and more excited at the thought of going home, and counted up the days till I would be carrying my "telescope" valise to the station and taking the train for Parkland. Then with just a day or two more to go, at the dinner table Billy and Mr. Magee and one of the men boarders began talking about the bridge being out at High River and how no trains would be able to get through to the South. I can still remember the sickening jolt it gave me to hear this. Billy was a railroad man so it never occurred to me to question the accuracy of the statement. I couldn't speak, but pushing my plate away from me, I left the table and went through the dining-room and kitchen into the pantry, and in behind the door, where I leaned with my head cradled in my arm and wept bitterly. Strangely enough, it wasn't Winnie but Mrs. Magee who came to tell me it was all a joke, and that they had made up the whole story to tease me. I still think it was a cruel idea of a joke.

Anyway I did get home and it was wonderful to be

back with Mother and Chaddy and the rest and see all the animals again.

When Easter came, it brought two new developments. Mr. Smith left to be a school inspector and I wrote a mock-tragic poem of farewell to him, and then was too shy to give it to him. Annie Broomfield copied it out and left it on his desk with no name attached. After he read it he came and stood in the aisle, looking down at me. He didn't say a word but I got redder and redder till each freckle stood out on my face. Then he grinned and walked away.

The other thing that happened was that Billy, I suppose to make amends for his behavior and also to show off his baby, decided to take Winnie for a trip back to Ontario. Mrs. Magee did not want to keep me on there while Winnie was away. Though I paid only half the regular rate for my board, I was supposed to work out the other half doing dishes, washing and waxing floors and such jobs, which I did to the best of my ability. She, however, preferred to have a man boarder who would pay the full rate. She liked men better anyway, and she definitely didn't like me. Mr. Magee, who came of good stock in Ireland, was always very kind to me and took an interest in my studies. When Father Lacombe started the Dunbow School for Indian boys he had asked Mr. Magee to come and teach carpenter work to the Indian boys, and this he had done for a number of years in a very happy relationship although he was a Protestant and an Orangeman at that. Rev. Father Naessens, the Belgian priest who was principal of the school, used to visit in the Magee home and his picture framed hung on the wall of their dining room.

Winnie arranged for me to stay with a former patient of hers, Mrs. Panter. I was glad to get away from the fear of smashing the thistle lamp in the parlor in a nightmare, and besides I enjoyed staying at the Panter home. Mrs. Panter had been a high school teacher in Ontario and was interested in my work. She had two young children, and her husband, being a railroad man, was away a great deal. After the children were in bed, we would settle down for a long talk on poetry, history, religion or marriage, any topic that

came up, for she treated me like an adult and drew me out to express my views. After a while she would say, "Well, Georgina Helen Thomson, B.A., you had better get at your homework." She always spoke as though it were a foregone conclusion that I would be going to university, and though the idea she planted lay more or less dormant for some seven years, it was probably due to her early suggestion that I eventually enrolled at the University of Alberta.

Just before our final examinations that summer, there was an especially important fair in the city called "The Calgary Dominion Fair," and the C.P.R. put on cheap rates for it. Some of my family came up for it, including Bee who was newly engaged to Walt Hawk, whom she was to marry six months later as I have related in the previous chapter. She had on a pretty summer dress and a wide-brimmed leghorn straw hat with roses on it, and she looked very gay and happy. Father had given her a dollar to spend, which seemed a large sum to blow in then. Walt was eleven years older than Bee, and Mrs. Panther said she hated to see her being married so young. When I asked her why, she said that she did not know what lay ahead of her. This was very true and if she could have foreseen that she would have ten children, she might have hesitated. But while her life in many ways was to be hard, she had many compensations, and the minister at her funeral service almost fifty years later, was to say with truth, "She was surrounded by love."

After I had written my final exams, I went home to await the results and to help on the farm. We had company that summer, our Aunt Elsie Wilson, Mother's unmarried sister, our cousin Mabel Booty from Galt and another cousin, Art Oliver, who came with them from Manitoba. Mabel and Art were very much in love and became engaged. Mabel was a bright, pretty girl, and they were both very happy, but their mothers, our Aunt Jane and Aunt Mary, would not countenance the marriage because they were first cousins. Though Mabel and Art were both of age, they hadn't the courage to go against their parents' strenuous objections. Meanwhile they had a happy, carefree holiday at our place.

It was at this time that Art helped Jim build the kitchen at the back of our house as already described. After it was finished, we gave a party for our visitors. We played games on the lawn till dark and then went in and danced in the new kitchen which had not yet had its partition put in. One of the guests was Hattie Wilson who had come west to stay with her brother Norval and his wife. She had been brought up a very strict Methodist and was horrified at the idea of having attended a dance. She reproached Mother for asking her when she knew there would be dancing. Mother was rather nettled and replied that surely she had a right to entertain guests as she pleased in her own house. Hattie then asked to be taken home, and as I remember it, Jim did take her home, but Chaddy thinks Mother talked her into staying. At any rate, she made a stand for her principles which took some courage, but I'm afraid the rest of us didn't let it spoil our fun.

Chapter Forty

SOME OF THE HIRED MEN IN OUR LIVES

In an earlier chapter I have told how Jim went back to his school books, studied hard and wrote the University of Toronto matriculation examinations at Western Canada College in Calgary the summer of 1908. When word came that he had passed, it was accepted in the family that he would be going east to university that fall. Mother thought it was a mistake and that he should stay on the farm, but Father never weakened in his determination to put his only son through as a doctor.

By the time he left, I was already away in Calgary attending Normal School, but Ethel and Bee said that the evening after Jim had taken the train, Father came in for supper and was washing as usual at the basin in the kitchen sink, when he suddenly began to cry, great harsh sobs that shook him and frightened everyone. Probably he had been so intent on his plans for Jim's future that he hadn't realized what it would be like for him when Jim had actually gone, and how lonely our home would be.

From then on we had a succession of hired men, none of whom really satisfied Father. The hired man has practically disappeared from the farming picture today, and has become almost an extinct breed, replaced by modern power machinery, but in the early days, each four-horse team had to have a man to feed, curry, harness and drive them.

Our first hired man, Harry Wakeman, was very good with horses. He had been, I think, a Barnardo boy in England and was brought out to Quebec by a family with whom he lived and who brought him to Alberta with them. I do not know how he learned to love horses in an English orphan home, but love them he did. We had four heavy black horses by that time, Prince and Duke, Pat and Mike. How Harry made them shine! And every bit of brass on their harness shone too. And how he saved them! He could not bear to

hurry them or see them as he thought, overworked. When they had to pull the heavy portable threshing engine, he would pat their necks afterwards and talk to them. "Poor Prince! Poor Duke!" he would say. Father was good to his horses but he thought Harry overdid it.

On the other hand, Harry hadn't the slightest interest in cows. He fed them and cleaned out their stable grudgingly, but he drew the line completely at milking them. He didn't know how to milk and he wouldn't learn. It was good policy on his part, but it left the milking still entirely to the women-folk, as Father referred to us. How I hated that term! It seemed to put us in a menial category.

Harry lived as one of the family. The small bedroom partitioned off at the end of the back kitchen was his and his successors, till in time there was a bunk-house for them. He went to church and social affairs with us and fitted into community life. He had quite a repertoire of songs which he would sing with a little urging. Most of them had a Cockney flavor, or perhaps it was just his accent. One of them went:

"Beer, beer, glorious beer,
Fill yourself right up to 'ere!
Drink till you're made of it,
Don't be afraid of it,
Stick to your old-fashioned beer."

Then there was one about helping the missus whitewash the garden wall. The chorus had quite a swing and ended:

"Slap-dab-slap with the whitewash brush,
Talk about a fancy ball!
But I put more whitewash on the old woman
Than I did upon the garden wall."

Harry always dressed very neatly and combed his hair with a special little wave in the front.

After a few years he left, I forget just why, and got a job with a neighboring farmer. Later he went up north and took up land of his own and we never saw him again, but we girls always remembered him for his kindness to the horses.

Another man we had, Roy Butler, a cousin of John



Hauling hay from a stack near Parkland about 1911. Left to right: Frank Roy (brother of Louis), George B. Thomson and hired man Roy Butler.

Wilson's, was quite rough with the horses and careless about their grooming. His interest lay with the cows, and of his own accord he got up early and did the milking. This was a break for us "women-folk," but we still didn't like his treatment of the horses. One night he rode Dixie to see some girl friend and rode him very hard. He was a heavy man and not a particularly good rider, and we hated to see our little saddle horse ridden so hard. Mother said something to him about it, which annoyed him, and he went into his room, packed his trunk and hauled it out to the road without accepting help. Father said he was a good worker and he hated to lose him, but he thought he must have wanted an excuse to quit and used Mother's few words of reproof as a pretext. He had had a letter from the east that that day.

We had a cousin, Roy Thomson, come out from Toronto to work for us, so Mother decided to break him in to milk. He had been born without a thumb on his left hand and he had always saved that arm and tended to hide it. Mother encouraged him to swing his arm as he walked, and she said the milking would help develop it. Poor Roy hated milking, though he loved the horses and working around with Father. Whenever he was milking, he kept peering around the cow to see if one of us might be taking pity on him and coming to take over for him. For this reason he prolonged the learning period as long as possible and never really became a good milker.

We had so many hired men over the years that I cannot remember even the names of some of them. There was one Scottish lad who worked for us during World War I. I remember him because of a dramatic episode before he left. The house was full of company and I was sleeping on the dining-room couch. It was summer time and in the early dawn I woke suddenly to see him standing looking down at me. This gave me quite a start, but when he made what was politely referred to then as "an improper suggestion," I made a record sprint to the stairs and up them to my sleeping family. Scotty, the collie who succeeded Buckles, ran puffing up the stairs beside me, sensing my alarm and offer-

ing her protection. Father fired the boy next day and I felt rather sorry for him, as he was far from home, and Father told us he wept and said he was sorry and did not know what had come over him. But I suppose he soon got another job as men were very scarce at the time.

There were always extra men around in harvest time. One year an old friend of Father's from Waterloo County, Bill Clemens, came out to work through the harvest. He was a short wiry man with chin whiskers, and was a very entertaining talker. When he got paid at the end of the season, he went into Nanton to cash his cheque and get some things. He had a few drinks and when he came home was in high spirits, talking and showing us his purchases. One of them was a fine new pair of boots. When he went to put them away in his bedroom off the kitchen, he made a mistake and opened the door to the cellarway. We heard a loud crash and everyone rushed to the head of the stairs. Old Bill was picking himself up at the foot, and his first remark was, "Pride goes before a fall." We helped him upstairs and were all relieved to find there were no bones broken. Afterwards he told us that during his descent he was wondering "Who put the damned cellar in my bedroom?"

One of the last of our hired men was Bruce Robinson, who came from Larne, Ireland. He used to entertain us with stories of raiding that went on between the rival factions over there, which accounts were given added colour by his soft Irish voice and accent. Part of the time Bruce was with us, we had another hired man, Archie Lake, a bachelor brother of Mrs. Linton's from Galt. By this time we had become affluent enough to acquire both an "instrument" and a gramophone. Archie had sung in the Presbyterian choir back home and on a Sunday afternoon he would go into the sitting-room and play hymns and psalms. After a while Bruce would go in, his eyes sparkling with mischief, and in a pause between Archie's solemn numbers, Bruce would start the victrola with one of his favorite records, quite often Harry Lauder's "Stop your ticklin' Jock." At the first strains, Archie would get up from the piano bench

and stalk from the room in outraged dignity. This was, of course, what Bruce wanted.

Archie's real interest lay in inventing. He always had some wonderful idea for an invention that was going to make him a fortune. The one that seemed most practical was for a spark arrester for the C.P.R. locomotives to prevent them from starting prairie fires. He did get this patented and had hopes of selling it, but his dreams never materialized. One winter he infected his hand badly by some injury from the gadget on which he was working, and wasn't able to do any chores for some time. He finally got a place in Calgary where he could get a room in exchange for looking after the furnace, which was coal in those days, and so at last he had time to carry on his inventions in peace.

Bruce was thrown from a wagon when he was hauling grain, and the heavy double-box load went over his leg crushing the bone badly. He was taken to the Calgary General Hospital where Chaddy was by that time in training. He had a great time with all the nurses. One day when the alarm rang for fire-drill, Bruce thought it was the real thing and he somehow managed to get out of bed and started to crawl down the hall on his hands and knees before he learned it was only a false alarm. His lameness from the injury made it impossible for him to enlist in the forces or be conscripted, but he became an army cook at Sarcee Camp. Whether he could cook or not, I'm sure he kept the boys entertained.

After the war, Bruce settled down with a nice little wife in Calgary. He was the only one of our numerous hired men with whom we kept in touch. Many years later, when Father died at the age of 95, Bruce was at his funeral, a link with the old days on the farm.

Chapter Forty-One

LEARNING TO BE A TEACHER

In my chronicles of our hired men, I have wandered a long way from the summer of 1908 when word came that Chaddy had passed her Standard V examination and Annie Broomfield and I our Standard VII. Annie's father and mother decided to send her back to high school in Calgary for her Standard VIII (the equivalent of Grade XII now) so that she would be able to go on and take her first class teacher's training the following year. My parents felt they couldn't afford the extra year for me, so I was sent to Normal School for a second class teacher's certificate. So I entered Normal School a few days after my 16th birthday, as green and immature as they come.

It was only a four months' term because the province was short of teachers and they had to be put through in a hurry to fill the demand. But I was glad it was no longer than four months. They were long enough for me.

The new sandstone Calgary Normal School opened for its first term that fall of 1908, and we were awed by its size and stately proportions. It seemed the last word in school architecture to everyone, and indeed I still think that though it may have lacked some of the "functional" merits of present day schools it was a vast improvement over their flat egg-crate style of architecture.

The first morning, the student body assembled in a large hall with panelled oak wainscotting and classical dimensions. Besides the younger students fresh from high school, there were many teachers from Ontario and the Maritimes and even the British Isles who wished to qualify for an Alberta certificate. The principal, Mr. George Bryan, gave us what would now be called a "pep talk," though he would have called it an inspirational address on education. Finally he paused and asked, "What is the most important requisite for a teacher?"

We were all strangers to him, and so he ran his eye down the student roll and picked out a name. It was mine. I sat in horrified silence for a moment, and then piped up in a weak little voice, "To know a lot."

There was a chilling silence while the principal fixed his reproving stare on my freckled face and that was no doubt nearly as red as my hair. "The most important requisite for a good teacher," he said coldly, "is a good moral character."

I wasn't much the wiser because at that time I did not know what "moral" meant in the sense that he used, but I did feel properly squashed.

My real troubles began, however, when I had to teach my first lesson. It was a nature study lesson and the topic was "The Gopher." We were divided into groups for teaching, and the leader of mine had got a stuffed gopher for me, but the amateur taxidermist hadn't got around to stuffing front legs which hung down in a limp way in front of the gopher, giving the otherwise erect animal a forlorn look. I knew quite a bit about gophers but couldn't get very enthusiastic about them as they were such a pest on the homestead, where the main thing was to destroy as many as possible before they ate the garden and crops. The youngsters in the class felt about the same as I did, but I thought we did not do too badly till the practice teacher told me it was clear from my lesson that I did not love children and did not love animals. As I was only a child myself, it seemed rather a cruel and sweeping criticism.

Another lesson that turned out badly was an assignment to teach a junior class how to draw a bunch of grapes. It was midwinter and the only grapes available were the expensive Malaga variety. I spent a precious twenty cents for a large beautiful bunch which I tied up by the stem in front of the class against a contrasting background. Alas, the stem broke, and the grapes fell in ruin on the floor.

At our one and only school party, the students were not allowed to dance, but were permitted to "promenade." In this, the couples formed in a long procession and walked slowly to music around and round the assembly hall. I had

invited Bill Bradley, a tall Irishman who boarded at Winnie's. He was quite good looking but he humiliated me by wearing a sort of fez from some lodge he belonged to. I felt quite conspicuous.

With the refreshments there was lemonade to drink and someone spilt some on one of the new oak window sills, leaving a big stain on the wood. This crime was reported to headquarters, and the assistant principal, a Mr. Thompson with a "p," called a meeting of all the students and lectured us on our vandalism. I think we had to pay a fine as well.

Winnie's father-in-law, Mr. Magee, was in charge of the janitor work and the upkeep of the building, and the students thought he must have been the one who reported to the powers that be, and they were very angry. They called an indignation meeting and said all the things they felt about Mr. Magee. I was sitting as inconspicuously as possible in the back row, but I had always liked Mr. Magee and I felt they were being unfair condemning him without any evidence. I got to my feet, blushing as usual, and said, "Mr. Magee didn't tell. He wouldn't do such a mean thing."

This brought only cries of derision, and nobody believed me. However, the episode had one happy result for me. One of the older students told Mr. Magee about my defence of him and he was so pleased that he bought me a pair of skates, what we called "hockey skates." They were my first screwed-on skates. Up till then, as I mentioned earlier, I had had only the old-fashioned spring skates that had to be clamped unto one's boots each time and fastened with skate-straps. Many a mile did I skate on my new blades in the years to come, and I still have them, they in turn having become genuine antiques and perhaps collectors' items.

Mr. Thompson took all the students in my class on a geography trip one day to study the contours of Calgary, its hills, river beds, flood banks, etc. From a hill in the south of the city, we were asked to sketch a map showing the windings of the Bow and the Elbow Rivers, their confluence, and the other physical features of the city. Mine was a feeble effort, but following the advice of one of the

boys, I went that evening to a real estate office and bought a map, from which I made a copy, so that I got a good mark for once.

Near the end of the term we all had to write a sample letter of application for a position as teacher in a school. The best letter and the worst were copied on the blackboard. Mine was the worst. All its failings were held up to ridicule, and while writers' names were not given, I felt sure that everyone knew the worst one was mine, and sat burning with shame and humiliation. I had been used to writing to relatives and friends, and my application was too informal and intimate. Still, I don't think it merited all the cruel things said about it. The writing, spelling and punctuation were all quite correct, something that could not be said about the work of sixteen-year-olds today.

The term finally came to an end and I was on the train about to leave for home when, wonder of wonders, Mr. Thompson arrived with an interim teaching certificate for me. Somehow I must have made the required number of marks after all. Of course teachers were very scarce in Alberta in 1908!

Chapter Forty Two

A SCHOOL-MARM AT SIXTEEN

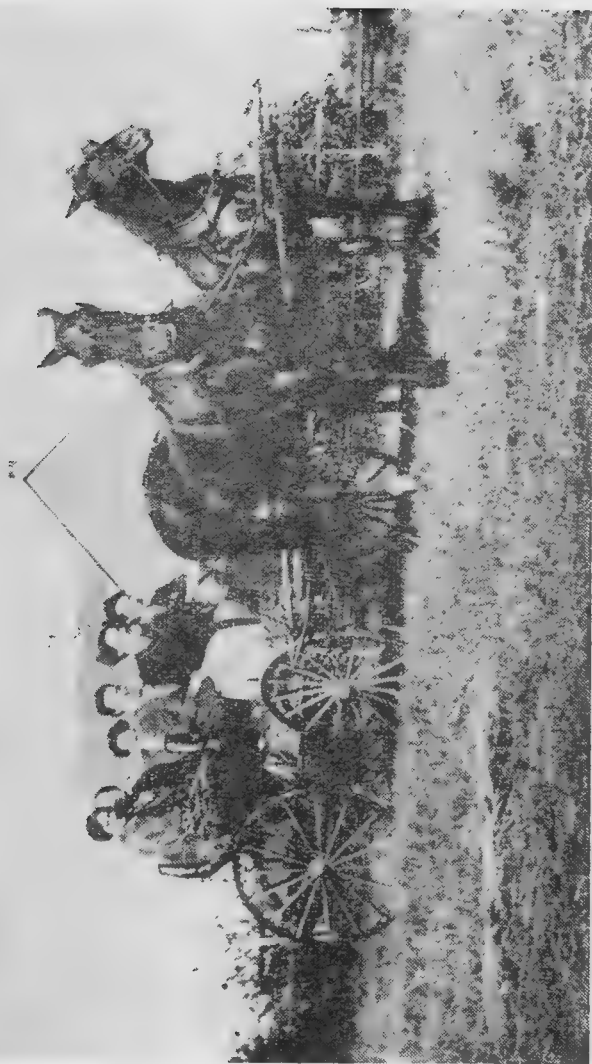
And so I was on the train again headed back to the homestead, to Mother and Chaddy and the rest of the family, to Buckles and old Roany, Dixie and Sammie and the other animals. There was this difference, however, I was going back as a school-marm, a sixteen-year-old school-marm. Mr. Johnston had decided to give up teaching and become a full time farmer on his homestead, so I had applied for Porcupine School and had been accepted.

There was the happy interlude of the Christmas holidays at home, with no more critical Normal School teachers to face, no more homesick nights. But after the New Year, I had to begin my teaching duties in earnest. Father let me ride Dixie to school, "a big advance" over walking. It was a cold January, and every morning when we started off, Dixie would squeal and kick and go in little buck jumps for a quarter of a mile or so, and then he would settle down to a steady canter over the snowy prairie trails. Although I wore long knitted underwear and had a divided skirt of corduroy velvet, I hadn't sufficient protection from the weather. The flesh on the front of my thighs was frozen so often that it became swollen and burning. Father went to Nanton and got some ointment from Dr. Creighton that healed it up. My ears and cheeks could be covered with a scarf, but in a biting sub-zero wind they would freeze and I knew what it was like to have "cauliflower ears." My nose, being of the pug variety, did not suffer so often.

Pupils from the nearest family were paid to come early and light the pot-bellied stove in the school, but on a very cold day, they sometimes would not turn up. In fact no children would come at all, and Father would have kept me home if he could have persuaded me. It was warmer out in the stable than in the school and I would sit there for a



Porcupine School, near Parkland, 1909. The five mounted pupils: (left to right) Arthur Eld, Russell Broomfield, Dora Hanson, Pearl Johnson and May Eversfield.



Off to pick saskatoons, summer of 1909, with the Hagerman democrat and team. Front seat: Edith Broomfield, Harriet Hagerman (driver), and Georgie Thomson. Back seat: Annie Broomfield, Chaddy Thomson and Martha Hagerman. Broomfield home in the background.

while with Dixie till I was sure no one was coming. Then I would head back north for home.

Later on, the Hagerman family bought land about a mile north of the school and built their home there. After that when I was returning home on a very bad day, especially when there was a storm blowing from the north, I would turn in half-frozen to their place. Dixie needed no reining, as he knew a warm stable and a feed of oats awaited him there. Mr. Hagerman or one of the boys would lead him away while I went into the warm kitchen where hospitality as warm as the kitchen fire awaited me. If the storm lasted all day, I would sometimes stay over night. There were no telephones when I first started to teach, but on a stormy night if I did not arrive home, Father and Mother understood that I would be at the Hagermans'. It was almost a temptation to stay there anyway on a cold night, for with Martha and Harriet, Albert and Tom, there were always games and singing around the piano after a jolly supper, and then we girls would talk half the night after we went to bed.

The first month I taught, what with horseback riding and my new responsibilities, I lost twelve pounds in weight which pleased me very much. At the end of the month I rode around to the home of the secretary-treasurer of the school, our old friend and neighbor, Mr. William H. Hawk, and got my first pay, the large sum of fifty dollars. It seemed a fortune to me. I gave Father \$40 and spent the most of the rest on an order to Eaton's. Among my purchases was some reseda-green wool voile which Mother made into a pretty dress for me.

There were no stores to tempt me, but we always had Eaton's and later Simpson's catalogues, and how we would pore over their pages, especially those showing women's dresses, hats, coats, suits, blouses and furs. Even our shoes were often ordered by mail, as it was simpler than driving the ten miles to Nanton, and gave us more choice in styles. As a result we weren't very well fitted, and our feet suffered for this later on.

Whenever I ordered clothes for myself I ordered the equivalent for Chaddy, as she was staying home to help

Mother. I remember that first year buying a brown suit for myself, a brown hat adorned with a huge satin bow in the style of the times, and a mink-marmot throw-scarf with muff to match. Chaddy chose a similar outfit in blue with a black fur and muff. We thought we were the last word in fashion.

Though I was only sixteen and Chaddy fourteen, we wore grown-up clothes with skirts reaching down to our ankles. I ordered some fine Persian lawn from the catalogue and Mother made me a beautiful dress trimmed with Valenciennes lace and insertion, embroidery and fine tucks. The sleeves were full-length and tucked from the elbow to the wrist. Ethel made Chaddy's dress from the same material but a different pattern, with lily-point sleeves and flounces and tucks on the skirt. We still own these dresses and sometimes lend them for period fashion shows, though most modern girls find it hard to get into them, as the waists are so tiny, nor would they meet on us now. To tell the truth, we wore corsets then, even at that tender age. We were innocent of cosmetics, however, and face powder, lip-stick, eye-shadow and eyebrow pencil were unknown to us. We would have been considered "fast" if we had worn them.

In a reckless moment I did send for a freckle remover which I saw listed in the mail-order catalogue, for my freckles were a great embarrassment to me. It turned out to be a piece of rubber covered with little rubber nodules, and a strap to go over the back of your hand to hold it firmly. The directions said to rub it briskly over your freckles, which I did. It did take my freckles off but it took the skin with them, so that the last state of my face was worse than the first and took quite a while to heal. I was never quite so trustful again.

When a mail-order box came to the express office at Parkland, I would call for it on my way home from school and tie it on the saddle horn. Dixie would pretend to be quite frightened of the ungainly thing thumping against his side and would roll his eyes and make it an excuse for going off on a wild gallop, which I didn't mind at all. In fact, I was so glad to get away from the classroom, that I usually let

him go as fast as he liked, and we usually made the last half mile in "nothing flat." A man in Sharman's store, watching me tear through the village, said, "That horse wants to go and that girl just lets him," which was quite true.

I spoiled Dixie in many ways. The prairie was still unfenced most of our way home, and on a pleasant summer day, Dixie would get bored following the trail and wander a bit from the beaten path. He had two dissipations. He loved to eat the tips of the wild lupine plants before they came out in bloom. I tried them myself and they had a pleasant sour taste, so were probably a sort of spring salad to him. Then in the late summer he loved the sweet purple tops of the thistle blossoms, which he ate very gingerly with his lips pulled back from the lower prickly part, while his teeth neatly snipped the bloom. He would scent or sight a patch of these tall, beautiful thistles a long way off, so we would zig-zag home, with long pauses while he enjoyed his feast. These were not the small-flowered Canada thistle, the bane of farmers and gardeners, but a pretty prairie plant not unlike the national emblem of Scotland.

One hot day Dixie played another trick on me. He made a bee-line for a slough and waded in. I thought he only wanted to cool his legs and get rid of insects, but this wasn't enough for him. Without warning, he folded his legs under him and lay down in the muddy water, where he proceeded to wallow. I kicked his ribs and whacked him with the reins till he finally got up. Then the cool water trickling down his legs started him off on the run and I could hardly hold him in. When Father came into the stable after we had got home and saw Dixie standing there all covered with mud, he got quite a scare and thought he must have rolled with me. He gave me a good talking-to about making Dixie behave. and after that I steered him away from any sloughs.

If the stable door was open as we came galloping down the lane, I wouldn't even bother to get off but would duck my head and go right in with Dixie to his stall. There I would pull off his saddle and bridle, give him some oats and hay, and after a farewell caress, would go into the house,

where Mother would usually make an early supper for us women-folk.

After supper either Chaddy or I would take Dixie or Sammie and ride after the cows, with Buckles going along to superintend. Then I would help Chaddy milk and feed the calves and do the other chores. My life was not really very different from what it had been before I went away to school in Calgary.

— I don't think I was a bad teacher, but I was so young and inexperienced and immature that I took it all rather lightheartedly. I played ball with the pupils and it was often hard to bring myself to ring the bell when recess or the noon hour was over. I used to pitch and the children called me after one of the well-known current pitchers. Once when I asked them to write a composition on a well-known character, one of the boys wrote about me, and his final sentence was, "She hasn't fanned yet." What higher tribute could one hope for?

Some of the students were as old as I, and one of them a year older. He began riding home with me after school saying he had to look for his father's lost calves, but I had to discourage that.

One day in saskatoon time the Hagerman girls, Edith Broomfield and Chaddy planned to drive to Willow Creek to pick berries and have a picnic. I couldn't bear to stay in the schoolroom while this was going on. The day before, I calmly announced that the next day would be a holiday and the children need not come to school. One child asked me what holiday it was and without a moment's hesitation I said "The Queen's birthday." Actually it was August, but as most of the students were of American birth, they didn't know much about queens and accepted my announcement without challenge.

So next morning I set off for the hills with the others in high spirits, driving the Hagermans' team in their democrat. I don't remember if we picked many saskatoons, but I do remember what fun we had, and our picnic lunch beside Willow Creek, even to the home-cured ham and how good it tasted with crusty homemade bread. A sudden storm came

up and we took shelter under the trees along the creek. Harriet was terrified of the lightning, but I did not feel a bit worried, in spite of my guilty conscience. It is a strange thing that although I had gone against my strict Presbyterian upbringing in telling a fib to my pupils and in violating my contract with the school board by taking an entirely unauthorized holiday, I cannot remember feeling guilty. As a matter of fact in all the years I taught in country schools, this day stands out a red-letter day in my memory, while the thousands of days I toiled conscientiously have faded into oblivion. The lovely sense of adventure as we headed for the hills, the sound of the creek rippling over its stones, the grateful shade of the trees after the glaring prairie sun, the taste of the bread and butter and ham, the smell of the rain on the warm prairie as we jogged home—it all comes back to me after more than fifty years. Sometimes I wish I had kicked over the traces oftener.

My salary may seem unbelievably small to teachers to-day, but as time went on I was able to add many amenities besides clothes to our life. Every mail-order I sent away, I would include a book or two. Then the next thing was a place to keep them. Marshall's hardware store in Nanton got in a few sectional bookcases in dark Mission oak, and for twenty dollars I was able to buy three sections with a drawer at the bottom. We all thought it beautiful and in such good taste, for Mission furniture was the newest thing in furniture then. It was the most exciting purchase I had ever made, but more was to come. I got so carried away that I decided to buy a piano. It was ordered from Ontario and arrived at the Parkland station on a bitter winter day. Father and the hired man of the day brought it home on the stoneboat and with extra help got it into the house. We were warned not to play on it till it got thoroughly warmed and all the frost was out of the strings. Finally I could wait no longer and put one finger down on a key. No note that has ever been struck on it since has sounded half as sweet. At last we had an instrument too!

I arranged for lessons with Miss Olive Hammill who had been a music teacher in Winnipeg and now lived with her

parents on their homestead on the southeast corner from ours. I paid for lessons for Chaddy too, but neither of us ever got to be very good players. It wasn't Miss Hammill's fault, but after teaching all day and riding home, I hadn't much ambition to practise, nor much time or privacy, as there were always a great many things going on and the sitting-room would be occupied. Father used to get irritated by scales and arpeggios and thought I should be able to play "pieces" right off. I did get to the stage where I could play a few things for Mother when we are alone, and occasionally I filled in at the church services. Probably the best thing I got out of it was a greater appreciation and understanding of music.

Chapter Forty-Three

I DISCOVER "BOYS"

Not long after I started to teach school, I discovered "Boys." Chaddy had always felt at home with boys and men, and liked to be out around with Father and any men working or calling at our place, but I was shy and self-conscious, chiefly, no doubt, because I was fat and had freckles and red hair, and red hair had not come into fashion then.

Our old teacher, Mr. Johnston, had a son by his first marriage who did not come west with the rest of his family because he was taking some course in the east. He eventually arrived and was soon quite popular. He was six feet tall with broad shoulders, and coming from the east, he was dressed in a newer style than most of the young men we knew and he wore his clothes with an air, or so I thought.

Ethel had always been a great favorite with Mr. Johnston, and Kenneth followed his father's example in admiring her, but she considered him too young to be interesting. He then turned his attention to Chaddy, but as he was five years older than she was, she thought he was much too old for her. So, as he told me later, he decided he would show them that there were girls just as nice as they were and he didn't need to go out of the family to find them. He was three years my senior and I was pleased and flattered by his attentions. He didn't dance, having been brought up in a strict Methodist home, but he began squiring me to other things with his father's horse and buggy.

An Ontario teacher, Miss Gardiner, who taught in the newly erected school of Grassy Plains, had started a Christian Endeavor Society which met Sunday evenings in that school, and it was a place where a boy could take his girl. Some of our elders said it was nothing but "a sparking school" and they were probably right. We did take turns speaking on the topics listed for the different meetings, but

I think we did it rather lightheartedly. I remember there was a series based on Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" including such subjects as "Doubting Castle," "The Slough of Despond" and "By-path Meadows." One lovely warm summer evening, Kenneth and I got into "By-path Meadows," for we dawdled along, walking the horse over the prairie trail, not realizing how time was passing. When we drove up beside the schoolhouse, the Christian Endeavor folks were singing the last hymn. One of the boys looked out the window and saw us and left his mouth open in his surprise. We didn't want to be teased, so hurried away before the Mizpah benediction. It was not that we had been "necking," but merely talking. A horse requires one hand to drive, and if Kenneth's arm did slip around me, we were chiefly engrossed in conversation. We were both omnivorous readers. Kenneth's Aunt Winnie Parkhill (the daughter of old Bailey Powell, the promoter of Parkland, and daughter-in-law of Mr. Parkhill who financed him) used to send him books for his birthday and Christmas presents, so that he had built up quite a library, many of the books being historical novels. We exchanged books and ideas and had a wonderful time reliving the olden days, and settling all the religious, political and social problems of our own times. Sometimes on a moonlit night we became more romantic and forgot the world's problems for a while.

Kenneth was a lot of fun too, and had a most infectious laugh that began away deep down inside him and finally came gurgling out. He loved to play tricks and practical jokes. The night Ethel and John Wilson were married, John's brother Norval had arranged to bring his team and buggy to our front gate and wait there in the dark till Ethel and John slipped secretly out from the house, when he would dash away with them before anyone could start playing tricks. Kenneth got word of this and he and Martha Hagerman decided to slip out with their coats on and fool Norval. They were about the same size as the bride and groom and Norval was completely fooled. He hauled them into the buggy, cracked the whip and the team was off on the gallop. They had gone nearly half a mile before Kenneth's

gurgling laugh gave them away and Norval drove sheepishly back for the real bride and groom.

In the winter, Kenneth built a little flat sleigh or go-devil, but he made it too narrow in the gauge for the trail and too high in the seat and tippy. He was quite proud of his handiwork and called one night with it to take me some place. Chaddy decided to go along, but as we drove down a little hollow, the runners hit some drifts in the untracked middle of the road, and the top-heavy load tipped over into the deep snow. Chaddy had been sitting in the middle on our knees so when we tipped she landed on top. She got to her feet, shook the snow from her clothes and started walking back home. We tried to persuade her to come back, but we were laughing so hard, our entreaties only made her madder than ever and she went stepping along the trail home without even looking back. She always insisted we did it on purpose.

The only complaint I had to make against Kenneth was that he didn't dance, and I liked dancing, so I usually went to these affairs with some other boy.

Then Father got the idea that there might be some love-making going on and he made the rule that when Chaddy and I went to parties or dances, we had to go together and not alone with one boy. This was explained to the boys but it didn't faze them. The two of us left home together with one boy in one top-buggy, for we had been promoted to this style of travel by then, but we came home each with a separate boy in a separate top-buggy. However, the two buggies were driven one immediately behind the other, so that we could truthfully tell Father that we came home "together" but not in the way he meant. It was a different kind of "togetherness."

I don't suppose many present-day young people ever saw a top-buggy except in pictures, but it was a comfortable way to ride, the top shading one from the sun on a hot day, and from rain or wind on a stormy one. Moreover it was a nice private place to court and be courted. Chaddy had a variety of escorts including Russell Broomfield and Hugh Hawk as well as Warwick Linton whom she eventually

married. I remember once she went some place with Herb Kinman and the boys changed one of the front wheels of his buggy to the back. The back one being bigger threw the buggy out of alignment so that they kept going in a circle, forcing the horse off the trail, while the wheels squeaked horribly. This was a trick that could not be played in the motor age.

In the summertime after the haying and before the harvest, we young people used to go camping back in the foothills on Willow Creek. We drove two wagons with double boxes on to hold all our gear, and had two teams to each wagon. With a modern car or truck the trip would take about an hour or so I suppose, but it took us the best part of a day. We would stop at noon for a picnic lunch in a shady place, and feed and water the horses. As we climbed further into the hills we felt as though we were going to the promised land, leaving our cares behind.

The tents would be pitched near the creek, not only so that water would be handy for cooking and washing, but so that we might enjoy the sight and sound of the stream which sang us to sleep at night. There would be three tents, one for the girls and their chaperon, one for the boys, and then a provision tent.

Willow Creek hadn't been fished much then and abounded in trout and grayling, so that fishing formed our chief amusement and occupation. Some of the boys, like Jim and Warwick Linton, were great fishermen and kept our larder well supplied. We had no ice or other refrigeration but the fish were cleaned and put into a pool in the creek built up with stones so that the fish were safely enclosed and yet the cold mountain water flowed over them, keeping them fresh and firm. We had fish fried on our campstove for our open-air breakfast and supper and I don't think anything ever smelled better than they did mingled with the aroma of the coffee simmering in a huge old-fashioned granite coffee-pot. At noon we all foraged for ourselves, making sandwiches to take on a fishing expedition, or raiding the tent for what we could find. Two of the girls were appointed each day to cook, with a boy to cut wood, make fires and help with the

chores. Kenneth and I were on the same team and to make sure that I did not sleep in on our day to cook, he fired a shotgun off which reverberated among the hills like a cannon and woke everyone else up too in the early dawn.

The first year that we went camping was the year that the negro boxer Jack Johnson won the world's heavy-weight championship. He was known as "The Big Smoke" and because Kenneth's name was Johnston (though with a "t"), the campers all began to call him "The Big Smoke" too. Kenneth wasn't much of a fisherman but he was a great walker and would take me with him on long exploring trips among the hills. He had such long legs and was such a strong walker that my short chubby legs had trouble keeping up with him and I was usually trotting along a couple of yards behind. When the others saw this, they thought we looked like an Indian and his squaw, and I was called "The Little Smoke."

Kenneth had spent most of his boyhood summers on his grandfather Parkhill's summer home on an island in Georgian Bay, where he became a good swimmer and oarsman. He tried to teach me to swim but the water of Willow Creek was so cold and swift that it took my breath away. Added to this was the fact that the others lined up on the bank to watch the fun and Jim offered Kenneth two chocolate bars if he would duck me. In terror I waded ashore and couldn't be induced to go in again. I had to wait for lessons many years later at the Calgary Y.W.C.A.

One year when we had been camping on the CC ranch owned by the Dick brothers, one of them ordered us off because, he said we were scaring his cattle. We hardly saw any cattle, as they were scattered over such a wide area among the trees and hills, and we wouldn't have done anything to scare them anyway, as we were all country young people used to stock. However, when he said he would cut our horses loose if we didn't move, we pulled up stakes and left in a pouring rain for another location. In the hurry, the boys, whose tent was teepee shape, left their tent-pole behind. There were no suitable trees on our side to cut down and make another, and the creek at this point was a roaring

torrent, swollen by the rain and running swift and brown. There was nothing for it but to have one of the boys swim across and cut down a suitable sapling, and Kenneth, being the strongest swimmer, was elected to go. We girls were ordered to stay in our tent, as Kenneth had to strip to make the swim. There was no way of telling how deep the creek was here, and to avoid an accident Jim and another boy were stationed at intervals downstream with ropes to which axes were attached as weights so that they would not be washed away, and these were to be thrown to Kenneth if the current was carrying him away. We were waiting anxiously in our tent when we heard roars of laughter coming from the boys. We didn't dare to go out to see what had happened, but later the boys told us that when Kenneth stepped into the torrent, he found it was a false alarm. The water hardly reached his knees and he simply waded across, laughing all the way at the boys stationed with their lifelines.

Every day Kenneth would build a huge camp fire on a stony beach beside the creek so that there was no danger of a forest fire. He enlisted the help of all the girls and had us dragging dry branches and pieces of driftwood which he skilfully built into the shape of a cone. At night, after darkness fell, the campers would gather around and Kenneth would give one of the girls, usually me, the honour of lighting the fire. It always burnt beautifully, for he was an expert at the job. We would all sit around watching the flames rising into the night against the lovely foothill background, as yet almost untouched by man. Sometimes we would play games, or sing favorite songs such as "Just a Song at Twilight," but often we just sat and watched the fire and listened to the sound of the stream.

We always stayed in the hills till the "grub" ran out. We even tried once to relieve our food shortage by making pies out of Aunt Jemima's pancake flour and filling them with green gooseberries that we gathered from the prickly bushes around the camp. But the camp-stove oven only burned the top, while the berries came out as hard as buckshot and sourer than anything one could imagine. To cap all, Harriet

Hagerman, who was in command of the enterprise, dropped one of them as she took it from the oven, and the unmelted sugar and uncooked berries scattered over the ground.

When only a heel of mouldy bread was left, we would regretfully pack the wagons, hitch up the teams and head for home. When we came to the last hill, we would say "Goodbye to God's country," and head down to the hot treeless prairie that lay below us and the work that waited for us there. Father always thought we had stayed too long fooling away our time, but they were happy, carefree days to be stored away in the memory for grimmer times to come.

It was on one of these camping trips that Kenneth first proposed to me. I was seventeen and he was twenty, and of course Father wasn't having any of that. He had nothing against Kenneth. In fact he really liked him, enjoyed talking to him and always hired him to fire the engine on the Big Four threshing outfit. But he thought Kenneth was careless and irresponsible, with no future ahead of him, but to work on his father's farm. Later Kenneth took up a homestead in the dry area around Foremost. He had to walk all the way out to it from Bow Island, about 30 miles, and batch in his shack through the winter. Father still insisted he would never make a farmer. Poor Kenneth never did, because he was killed at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917.

Chapter Forty-Four

WORLD WAR AND MANY CHANGES FOR US, FATHER SELLS THE HOMESTEAD

In those happy carefree days of which I have written, none of us dreamed that a world war was coming soon that would bring anxiety and sorrow to the prairie as it did to homes all over the world. When the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated at Sarajevo in the summer of 1914, it didn't mean much to us, but soon even in our quiet neighborhood the ominous threat began to be felt. We had no radios to get the news but people waited anxiously for their newspapers and for telephone and telegraph messages. The evening before the declaration of war, Chaddy and I rode up on Dixie and Sammie to meet the train and get the mail. There was a forest fire somewhere in the mountains filling the air with smoke and giving the sunset a strange eerie light. There was a feeling of foreboding in the air, but yet it all seemed far away from us and unreal.

Before it was over there were few families untouched. The Presbyterian Ladies' Aid had an Honour Roll made with illuminated lettering by the sisters in the Calgary convent, with the names of the boys on active service. The names of those who left later were lettered in by Mother. It was framed and hung in the Presbyterian Church and from time to time a gold star was added to the names of those who had made the supreme sacrifice.

Kenneth went with the 39th Battery, 10th Artillery Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, after a course at the Kingston Military College. A star was added to his name after Vimy in April 1917. Memorial services were always held in our little church for the boys who fell. The last one was for Douglas Linton who was killed at the very end of the war. We sent his brother Warwick, who was with the 8th Field Ambulance in France, some pressed roses from the service. Warwick made a little cross for Doug's grave

with a small glass-covered compartment in which he put the roses from home. He walked many miles to the place where Doug was buried to place it on his grave, and planted violets from a nearby ruined convent there.

The war years changed many things in our lives and in the community. Jim graduated and after finishing his internship in Bridgeport, Connecticut, came home with a bride. He started practising in Calgary and then moved to Seattle, Washington. In the latter part of the war he came back to Canada and enlisted in the Canadian Medical Corps. Winnie's husband went over with the 82nd Battalion from Calgary. Ethel and Bee and their husbands were on their farms raising wheat and their families. Bee, who had ten children in all, said she was so busy with her babies that she hardly knew there was a war on.

In the fall of 1914 Chaddy went up to Calgary and began her training as a nurse in the Calgary General Hospital. In the fall of 1915 I entered the University of Alberta as an Arts student. I had always had a yearning to go to college. After the war started, the young university sent out a number of its professors to give lectures throughout the province and stimulate interest in the struggling institution. Robert K. Gordon, the assistant professor in the English Department, came to Parkland, and to an audience of little more than a dozen, spoke on "War Poetry in English Literature." I was interested and thrilled to hear someone actually speak about poetry. I had always been considered "Queer" because I not only liked to read poetry, but even tried to write it. Now here was a man, a Rhodes Scholar at that, devoting a whole evening to it, even though the audience was sparse. How wonderful it was to me to hear him read the old ballads, such as "The Battle of Chevy Chase," and great passages from Shakespeare and other poets! I resolved then and there to go to the University of Alberta so that I might take lectures from him, and I did.

Mother never tried to prevent her daughters from leaving home. Whatever she felt inside, she made us pretty dresses, kissed us goodbye and wished us success. Father was more emotional and always wept, which made it very hard to go.

The two of them were now left on the homestead alone with what hired men they could get. I was home for five months every summer and took over a lot of the milking, churning and cooking for the men, quite a job in harvest time with the long table of hungry workers, when cakes, pies and other baking disappeared like a whiff of air.

Father got tired of hired men. He had done well through the war years when the price of wheat was high, and now with the price of land going up to an unprecedented height, Father, though barely 60, suddenly decided to sell his homestead and the two quarters of C.P.R. land he had owned for some years. How he could bear to part with his cherished quarter-section on which he had filed so proudly, and the horses he loved, I do not know. Dear old Buckles had died a few years earlier from a kick by a horse, but his successor, Scotty, was there. Dixie he did not sell but gave him to Bee and Walt knowing he would always have a good home.

I was not at home when the sale took place. I do not think I could have borne it. Mother did not want to leave the farm. She would have liked Father to build a more modern farmhouse for them and let a hired man and his wife have the old one. Many years later after Mother died I found plans of houses she had designed or cut from magazines, among her papers. But she never questioned Father's judgment and authority, though she was much better educated than he was and in many ways had a better mind. He was "Caesar in his own house," and she was the yielding Victorian wife. I think he soon regretted selling the farm, and always spoke of the homestead years as the happiest in his life.

I still go back to the Parkland district to visit at my sister Ethel's home and those of many nieces and nephews and old friends. (Bee died in 1956.) It is all very different now. The homes are modern, hydro-electric power having given them refrigeration, deep freeze, electric ranges, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and every other conceivable convenience. The old privy and the basin in the sink are replaced by a shining bathroom. The farmer's wife has only to turn a tap for all the hot and cold water she needs. It

is a far cry from the barrel of water we used to haul on the stoneboat from the spring beside the pasture slough.

I wouldn't want to go back to our primitive way of life on the homestead, and yet it is a strange thing that when I think of those days, I do not remember any of those things as being hardships or privations. You will say that age has thrown a golden haze over the past, as it always tends to do. Perhaps, but there is more to it than that. It was a wonderful thing to come as children to such a beautiful part of the country, to wander at will as we did over the prairie, unrestricted by fences or roads, for the little winding trails made hardly more impression than did the buffalo and cattle tracks. The sea of grass, untouched except by grazing animals since the beginning of time, stretched on all sides of us to the horizon. In the spring it was purple with crocuses, and all summer long bright with a succession of flowers, yellow buffalo beans, wine-red shooting-stars, blue lupines, pink wild roses, golden daisies and a host of others that Chaddy and I discovered on our wanderings with Buckles.

Now it has all changed and gone, and even if the flowers were still there, the people rushing along the hard-surfaced highways in their high-powered cars would not have time to see them. They even bypass the little towns that meant so much to us in the early days. Nothing must impede them in their mad urge to get somewhere at the highest possible speed.

I seem to hear over the roar of the cars and trucks, the rumble of the lumber wagon bumping along the gopher holes, or the soft rhythmic thud of Dixie's and Sammie's hoofs on the prairie sod. I remember all the horses so gentle, so faithful, patiently pulling the breaking plough, the disk and harrows, the seed drills and the heavy binders, making it possible for the homesteaders to grow crops and make a living for themselves and others. The bones of all these horses have long been mingled with the soil they tilled. I hope their ghosts have found green pastures where they may rest and be happy in a horses' heaven, while tractors, combines and other expensive power machines do so effortlessly what they accomplished with such toil. Dixie's soft

whinny, the pretty little broken stripe of white down his face, the touch of his velvet nose in my hand as he nuzzled for oats—these come back to me more vividly and poignantly than do many great events in my life.

The other animals too are as real as the people I have since known and worked with, in a sense more real. I have only to shut my eyes and see old Roany standing chewing her cud while I milked her and sang in time to the soft churn-churn of the milk. And Buckles, the companion of our walks, the guardian of the place, his bark warning us of hawks or coyotes or strange cattle—I can still see him busy and responsible, rounding up the cattle or shaking an unwary gopher that had ventured into his domain.

There must have been many times when, like other homesteaders, we were tired and cold and perhaps lonely, and wished we had more money, prettier clothes, more interesting food, a more comfortable home. I know there were hail storms and blizzards. But these aren't the things that live in my memory. It is the shimmering mauve and gold of morning on the prairie with perhaps a mirage bringing distant homes and little towns strangely near for a brief while; the flaming beauty of the sunsets above the foothills and Rockies night after night, never the same but always uplifting the heart no matter what the day held for us. I remember the skeins of wild geese flying in "V" formation through the twilight on their way north, their strange honking filling the air and making us feel excited, because spring was on the way. Then in the fall we heard them again as they passed south over our heads, and we knew the first wintry storm would soon be arriving. I remember with most love the liquid song of the meadowlark that brought joy to all prairie dwellers.

Like all old-timers, I remember the friendliness of our neighbors, the simple meals shared and seasoned with laughter and good fellowship, the doors that were never locked.

And best of all I remember my family and the winter evenings when we sat around the table playing games together or reading by the single coal-oil lamp in the centre, or perhaps listening while Mother read aloud. The wind

sweeping across the dark, empty plains, might howl around our little wooden house, but we were warm and snug beside the stove with its glowing coal fire, with the glow of affection and contentment in our hearts.

Boys and girls now may find it hard to imagine that children could be happy in such a world, without television, radio, automobiles or any of the modern gadgets, not even a telephone for years. That is why I have written down all I can recall of those times, so that children and grown-ups too of the future generations may know what it was like to live on a homestead in Southern Alberta at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a way of life that has disappeared almost as completely as the buffalo. Moreover many books have been written about the Indians, the explorers, the missionaries, the Mounted Police and the ranchers, but very little about the homesteaders. What little has been written usually pictures their life as humdrum and dreary, lacking the romance of the earlier times. I have tried to show that homesteading was a happy life, not grim at all. It was full of fun and good times, and if there were spear-grasses as well as shooting-stars, all in all I can't think of anything better than to have been homesteaders' children on the prairie of Southern Alberta in the year 1904.



